

# THE STUDENT WORLD

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## EDITORIAL

### Summons to Christian Obedience

In January 1921, a little more than two years after the armistice of 1918, Viscount Grey of Fallodon, the former British Foreign Secretary, opened a student conference on international and missionary questions in Glasgow. He had been asked to speak upon "whether a new world is possible and desirable". This is what he said : "A new world in one sense is not possible, not in the sense of being a world entirely different from the present, which has broken with all the traditions of the past. I don't think that is humanly possible, but a better world is undoubtedly desirable, and is undoubtedly possible. That depends upon ourselves". With what startling realism these words fell upon the ears of idealist students then! We believed in creating a new world; and all we could have, according to this practical statesman, was a better world. And yet today how strangely lacking in realism even his words sound, how optimistic in relation to our contemporary situation! In January 1948, a little less than three years after another armistice, the chairman of the World's Student Christian Federation, speaking to students at the Westminster Conference<sup>1</sup>, began his address

<sup>1</sup> This was a British S.C.M. meeting with two hundred delegates of other nationalities. We are grateful for the opportunity of publishing the main addresses. *Ed.*

with these sombre sentences : "There have been times when student conferences turned to the subject of international affairs with eagerness and expectation... You and I do not live in such a time. Most of us will have come to this meeting with a sense of hopelessness".

How greatly has the Christian temper changed in twenty-seven years ! The war of 1939-1945 and the years since have made us much more aware of the limitation of human possibilities. We are less certain that the future "depends upon ourselves". And we are chary of making great statements as to how Christianity may change the world. Perhaps we are too chary ; but certainly no such statements were made at the Westminster Conference. Yet the four great utterances recorded in this issue of The Student World are not defeatist ; rather they should inspire us to realistic action. From the degradation of the human person in our modern world, seen so poignantly in his own country, Bishop Lilje calls us, in a supreme act of vision and courage, to see the true basis of all our life in the joy of God Himself. Out of the equivocal political situation of our day Professor Niebuhr urges us to practical decision in a spirit of faith and forgiveness. In a world which is taking sides with relentless folly Dr. Visser't Hooft bids us avoid the easy judgments and listen to the voice of God in our hearts. As students, whose job is thinking, Professor Hodges reminds us in no uncertain fashion that we must believe before we can begin to understand. Thus the underlying conception of the whole Westminster Conference in its platform speeches, its worship and its long hours of group discussion, was that God has something to say to us amid the confusion and complexity of the modern world, and that we must hear and obey. The first pamphlet about the Conference was called Christian Obedience in the Modern World, and the theme made its appearance fitfully, like an uncertain flame, in all the literature. Titles have their importance. Let us assert once for all that the message of the Westminster Conference to its two thousand members was a Summons to Christian Obedience.

This is a generation which understands obedience. The majority of the men, and many of the women, at Westminster had been in the forces. Not a few of the Continental delegates had known what regimentation or occupation meant, and, as a sharp reminder of the incongruous nature of post-war justice, there was the most helpful presence of a group of German prisoners of war. But Christian obedience has qualities which all worldly obedience, whether voluntary or involuntary, lacks. "We ought to obey God rather than men" contended Peter and the other apostles, and then set out in confident abandon to change the world. The political obedience of our day seems either to cut the nerve of initiative or to lack a real basis of confidence. Youth today seems to have to choose between two forms of obedience. Either it may decide that the state or party is right, and find the whole purpose of its life in receiving and obeying orders; or it may continue in an uneasy discipline, accepting inevitable restrictions, without much confidence in the results. Obedience is a word which needs to be redeemed, and in the Bible it is redeemed. That is why its message can speak with such power in our day.

Once in captivity an exile had a vision of the majesty of God. "He had lived through a period of unprecedented public calamity, and one fraught with the most momentous consequences for the future of religion". In that state of political powerlessness, and religious hopelessness, the vision was too much for him, and he fell upon his face. Then came the decisive summons: "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I shall speak unto thee". To obey God rather than men is to regain one's personal initiative. How often was that proved in the dark, and yet illumined, days of Christian Resistance in Europe. Our own Federation story holds abundant evidence<sup>1</sup>. And still today, in the half-lights, and ambiguities, and deteriorations of the present time, it is true. As Christians we must not forget that in one sense Viscount Grey was right when he said: "That depends upon ourselves". He who enters into

<sup>1</sup> Christian Resistance in Europe 1939-45, see letter enclosed.

*Christian obedience is entrusted with a particular measure of personal initiative, which the forces of the world, no matter how hampering or how insistent, cannot take from him.*

*“Son of man, I send thee” is the next word which came to Ezekiel, and which always comes to him who hears God speak. It came to many at Westminster, as they wrestled with the problems of life in college and in the world. In the same Christmas vacation two other similar meetings were held : the Triennial Conference of the Indian S.C.M. at Madras, and the North American Student Volunteer Conference at Lawrence, Kansas. Both of them were specifically concerned with the knowledge that, unless Christian obedience takes you out on the frontiers where the Christian community is in dire need of strengthening, it will soon become another conventional position, to which the name Christian is vaguely attached. In India young Christians learnt that they must make personal sacrifices, if the Church were to play a creative part in the new day of their country. At Lawrence young Americans saw that the geographical frontiers to which they are being called are also Christian frontiers. Christian obedience means that you cannot choose a direction which appeals to you; you must go where you are sent. And the call of the Church for service on the frontiers is one of the ways in which God has always spoken. To face a specific challenge is the best way of learning what God would say to us. Anyone who reads M. M. Thomas' address through to its moving finish will place himself in one of the most realistic positions for making up his mind.*

*“Son of man, be not afraid”. This is the word we need for our “sense of hopelessness”. Partly our hopelessness comes from factors in the world around us. Is this the kind of world, we ask, in which it is worth while making up your mind what you will do with your life ? What will such a decision amount to in this atomic age when man's new powers of self-destruction bring chilling fear into our hearts ? Let us not forget that, although the means of destruction are new, the spirit of destruction is not new. It was “to a rebellious nation”, to “impudent children and stiff-hearted” that Ezekiel was sent. “And thou shalt say*

unto them, Thus saith the Lord God... [And thou shalt speak my word unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." God is still in communication with His world. The God we know in Jesus Christ may speak in judgment upon men, but He has not given them up in despair. He has something to say to His world, and He calls for messengers. He who seeks to go where God would send him, and speak His word, need not be afraid of what man may do unto him.

But partly our "sense of hopelessness" comes from within. A report from the North American Conference reads: "We thought to claim the unoccupied frontiers of the world, but we found that Christ was seeking to claim the occupied frontiers of our hearts and wills. Thus a conference on Christian frontiers, which began with the slogan, 'not just Questions — Answers' ended with but one answer really, 'the ultimate frontier is self'". It is "the occupied frontiers of our hearts and wills" that ultimately hold us up. Before our own stubbornness and perversity it is easy to lose heart. The persistent enemy within the citadel of our own souls is too strong for us to withstand. "Son of man, be not afraid... though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions". There is no escape from the fear of ourselves, except in explicit acts of obedience, again and again renewed, to the call of God, Who bids us stand upon our feet, and ever repeats His word: "I do send thee". God can and will lead us across "the ultimate frontier of self" into the freedom of those whose meat and drink it is to do His Will. R.C.M.

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Ne sit nobis, Domine Jesu, ad judicium verbum tuum auditum et non factum, cognitum nec amatum; creditum et non servatum, qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivis et regnas Deus in saecula saeculorum.

O Lord Jesus, let not thy word become a judgment upon us, that we hear it and not do it, that we know it and not love it, that we believe it and not obey it. Thou who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest world without end.

THOMAS A KEMPIS.

# What is a real Person?

HANNS LILJE

We are called today to think about one of the main perplexities of the modern world which faces the Christian, and to the same extent the non-Christian, the secular, man. This one commanding problem, which is being put to our generation, looks to me like a frontier at which, much to their own surprise, very different people meet. Utterly different as their background is, they find themselves threatened by the same appalling discovery, namely, that the world has lost the answer to the question what a real person is. Is it not wonderful that in a world torn asunder we at least have one thing in common, namely, this perplexity and this problem? Is it not strange that one fact at least has a unifying effect upon all of us, namely that everybody, irrespective of his spiritual tradition or background, has to try to find an answer to the question: how can we rediscover the meaning of man in this world, and how can we rediscover the answer to what a real person is? Now this is one of the fundamental aspects of Christianity. Whatever changes may come over man's thoughts or intellectual tradition, the fact remains that the Gospel has to do with real persons and living men, and so I ought to add this further reflection, that Christianity owes a great deal of thanks to the so-called "world" for reminding it of one of its fundamental truths.

## *The history of depersonalisation*

Now let us start with a few reflections upon the history of the problem. I am going to suggest as a title for the next paragraph: the history of depersonalisation. You must not be terrified by this word! Let us see what it may mean. I have to refer to a sort of drama in the

intellectual or spiritual world. Looking back upon the last century, or the last century and a half, one discovers that this last chapter in the spiritual and intellectual history of mankind started with a splendid revolutionary gesture, namely the Declaration of the Independence of Man. Man gave notice in the name of freedom that he was severing his connections with the transcendent world and that he would try to live in this world upon his own resources. Now this great revolutionary gesture was the beginning. What then is the end of this chapter of modern history of thought ? The end is exactly the opposite ; there is no space for freedom left. And it is a curious fact that man does not even in some cases seem to notice that he gave up his freedom, or, which is even more perplexing, he seems to have voluntarily given up all space for freedom in this modern world.

I do not need to dwell at full length upon the details of this history of the last century, but I might remind you of the fact that after the beginning, let us say one hundred or one hundred and fifty years ago, there was an increasing wave of individualism. Man did not accept any other value than himself. Man was the value by which he judged everything. And now we have to consider the end of all this. As I said, there would seem to be no actual freedom left in this world. One may look for excuses. One may say that this is a question of sheer necessity. Modern life is not so made that man could enjoy freedom at any cost. It seems to be inescapable that he has to limit his own freedoms ; and you know as well as I do what that includes. There are young people in this world who cannot choose their life-profession for themselves, because in their respective countries the Labour Office will tell them what profession they are going to have. Let me just remind you of a more fundamental problem. Man cannot eat what he wants to eat, because the Food Office will tell him what he can eat or not eat. He cannot live where he wants to live, or move where he wants to move, because everything is being regulated for him. I say this may be just sheer

necessity due to the laws of modern life. But is there not something more behind it? Take one restriction which seems to me simply awful, that of rationing and regulating man's leisure time pursuits. Even the time when man ought to be free is subject to this tendency of being regulated, and he is told what he must do, when he tries to enjoy his free hours. This of course is not just sheer necessity.

If we go on, we discover more serious factors in the picture. I think the most surprising element in the modern situation, as I have tried to describe it, is that man seems to be willing to accept all these limitations. He does not suffer from this encroachment upon his personal freedom. There seems to be in some parts of the world, if I may put it this way, even some sort of love of being a slave. Man is not at all afraid of being a slave, because there seems to be a sense of security involved. It might be a key to many puzzling problems of the last decades if one tried to discover how much man did in order to secure this personal security.

You may know that one of the greatest European thinkers, the great Swiss, Burckhardt, considered this to be the key to every understanding of the bourgeois mind, namely that man tried to live in security, and that he was prepared to give up everything, including personal freedom, if only he might have this sense of security, personal security, instead.

This leads to the other discovery. There are so many theories about all this attitude to freedom, so many philosophies which try to explain why it is inescapable, and why man has to give up his personal freedom. But the end is always the same. Man is not a person in the full sense of the word, so long as he cannot enjoy freedom as he ought to do. I just want to remind you of this surprising — or may I call it dramatic? — result that the modern world, the so-called modern world, has forfeited willingly some of its most cherished ideals, and exactly those ideals with which it started. It has accepted life without a real chance for freedom.

*The loss of spiritual background*

Let me turn to a second point, which I should like to call the spiritual background. The fact that man has lost all meaning, and no longer knows what a person is, seems to me to be the outstanding, and at the same time the most tragic, illustration of the truth that you have to pay a terribly high price for neglecting the spiritual side of life. It does not pay to neglect this truth, for as long as man does not realise what he is doing he is even more depressed. He seems to be helpless against an unknown fate. Of course, he tries to build up his theories.

There is, on the one hand, the tyranny of the biological categories. Man has indulged so much in this merely biological thinking about himself that he has lost nearly all sense of a supernatural dignity in man, and this of course is a serious loss. There is, on the other hand, the fact that man seems to be ready to accept the most curious type of myth about himself. I consider some of the racial theories of recent years as an illustration of these curious myths about man, which are of course far from the truth. And this is why we have to try to discover the real spiritual background of modern life. I may point out two apparently inevitable elements which are closely interwoven. These two things are technical civilisation, on the one hand, and modern mass movements, on the other hand.

Now technical civilisation, of course, is inescapable. Who would be so oldfashioned as to denounce technical progress? Certainly not I. And yet there is a discovery which I do not need to explain at full length to you, namely that this great and majestic instrument of man, technical civilisation, which was to bring ever greater freedom to him, has now become the means of his enslavement, and all the so-called achievements of technical civilisation, all the so-called progress, are just so much externality. Some of the main elements of human

life simply seem to have disappeared in the midst of all these external things which are bothering his mind.

Then, there are modern mass movements. It is a very serious thing that the modern mass movements really are inescapable, that man cannot find his existence without them. It is no use trying to stem the tide. But does this really seem to be man's fate, man's only chance for existence : to be, willingly, or unwillingly, a member of a big mass organisation ? You cannot think of modern political life without mass powers. You cannot think of modern economic life without mass organisations. And the only means of maintaining his existence as person appears to man to be that he should become a member, or perhaps I should say an atom, in such a mass organisation — just an atom, and the mass organisation will do all the important things for him.

Now this all affected man's nature and his understanding of what a real person is. Let me point to three main results. I find, first of all, a deep uncertainty about the nature of a person. One of our great thinkers says that our generation is like a troop marching over a bridge which is enveloped in fog. The men cannot see the other side, nevertheless they march on. That typifies the modern attitude of man. This army marches in any case, lest the uncertainty grow and perhaps give way to shuddering fear, but it does not out-march the question behind, the question which might involve sheer panic, the question which must not be asked at any cost — whither are we going ?

This uncertainty about man's nature is illustrated further by the manifold attempts to explain man. There are so many different theories which have followed one another in the last decades that one is only surprised how many theories there are. Anyone with a gift for dramatisation would find it a provocative undertaking to trace these various interpretations. The search began with that splendid revolutionary gesture, to which I have already drawn attention.

Now let us turn, for example, to the theories and philosophies that have issued from the study of the psychology of the unconscious and the subconscious since the time of Freud. The astonishing outcome is that, with all our new scientific techniques, a single disconcerting conclusion has emerged, namely that man is not the master of his fate. The powers of the unconscious and the subconscious mysteriously determine his life, and therefore he is bound, and not free. There have been other researches that have been undertaken with the aid of modern scientific methods, enquiring into man's environment, his origin or psychology, or his economy, but they seem in all their variety to arrive at only one conclusion. Man's lack of freedom, and therefore also his uncertainty about what a person is, is complete. At the end of this exhaustive search for the reasons for man, we are left with the announcement that it is impossible any longer to find any sense in the existence of a real person.

### *The loss of joy in life*

Another phenomenon which I consider to be serious is the loss of naïve joy in life. One of our great tragic thinkers during the last decades of last century, Nietzsche, sang the praise of the joy of living, and it sounds today in our ears like a cry of ardent longing for something that had already disappeared from Nietzsche's own world. Gone is the readiness to live, the ease of life, the great richness of the world that we live in, the consciousness of beautiful things, and a life full of adventure. Gone is, in many cases, the gift of humour. This is indeed a particularly significant point. Every psychiatrist knows how serious is the effect upon a soul-sick man if he lost his sense of humour, for this divine light-footed humour is deeply bound up with the will to live. God has meant that easy joy of life to be one of man's main elements. Therefore, when the capacity for humour is lost, the capacity for real seriousness is lost also. They

go inseparably together. The result is that sentimentality and pathos take the place of proper seriousness towards life. The man who no longer realises that there are convictions for which he must be willing to lay his head on the block, is probably also completely humourless. The balance between seriousness and humour is being destroyed, and that leads to a sort of spiritual paralysis or torpor. Man's whole being is hardening and losing this flexibility which is necessary for a really living person ; and so more and more the human element is disappearing from the form of man.

Now what has all this to do with the spiritual background ? I think there is only one explanation. If man loses the knowledge of God, he also is bound to lose the knowledge of what a person is. If the image of God, the living God, is destroyed, the image of man is destroyed also. There is no escape from this.

I might choose again an illustration from political life. Wherever the state takes the place of God, it is inevitable that man loses the meaning of being a real person. I think it was the great Russian thinker, Berdayev, who said "Deification of the State leads to the bestialisation of man". Both go inseparably together.

After all these dark and sinister outlooks, let us ask a further question : are there any chances for the rediscovery of what a real person is ? The intellectual attempt to solve the problem is but another attempt to escape the problem. To try to escape by intellectual solutions is just another form of the hardening process, the terrorising process, which undermines the real and full meaning of life and personality. The Christian answer anyway is not a merely intellectual one. The Christian puts his trust in revelation. That means he looks for the answer to come not in such a way that he himself could be as well able to deliver it ; but he knows the answer to his question must be given to him. It is not a problem of knowledge, but of acknowledging what God has to say to him. To illustrate this, I might refer to three main points of the Christian affirmation of what a person is.

*Man's unchangeable existence*

The first point seems to be a difficult one, but I think it is the main message of Christianity for our generation : the fact that man must lead an unchangeable existence. Let me try to explain this. It is a very serious truth that man cannot exchange his place with anyone else. He has to live *his* life, he has to live *his* existence, he has to accept *his* responsibility. There is a powerful illustration borrowed from the early Lutheran writings. Martin Luther refers, in seeking to explain what a real person is, to the hour of death, and he says when a man dies, *he* dies, not somebody else. This seems to be very simple and naïve, but it is at the same time a terrifying and majestic truth. He dies, not somebody else in his place. There are two conclusions intended in this. The first is that in the very hour of death man discovers that someone else is master of his life, and not he himself. It is God who fixes the hour of his death. It is all sheer illusion what man says about being the master of his own life. To alter a saying of Our Lord to the form He may originally have intended, "Nobody can add one inch to his lifetime". God draws the line, no one else. But if a man cannot escape this truth in the very hour of his death, in the very last hour of his life, then it is true of all his life, before that last hour. During all his life he must be aware that there is a master of his life.

The second consequence, included in this discovery is that he has to die his own death, and that there is no proxy for him when he has to die. Few things are so deeply rooted in the mind and heart of man as the longing for someone who could take his place. This becomes a lifelong habit with many people, this longing for someone else to take our responsibility from us, to step into our place. It might also be a lifelong illusion, because there is no such possibility. If a man indulges in this longing throughout his life, even to some extent

successfully, there is one hour which ends all these dreams, the hour of his death. Man dies alone, in utter loneliness. In the hour of his death there are just two left, the living God, and the mortal man.

Now this is the point where we can rediscover what a real person is. If this is true of the very last hour of man's life, it is true of every hour of his life. There is not a single minute in man's life when he does not face God alone, in utter loneliness. This has nothing to do with individualism, be it sentimental, romantic, titanic, superficial, egotistical or naïve, individualism. This is, I frankly confess, the only possible starting point if we are to rediscover for the modern world the true meaning of a person.

Let me try to illustrate this by choosing the illustration of a father. If a man happens to be a father, nobody else in the world is his child's father, that means no one else in the world can accept responsibility for his child, as he has to accept it. No state can take away the responsibility which a father has for his child, no society can. There is no earthly institution which can free a man from this responsibility which he has to answer as a person. Whatever thinking Christians give to the great problem of education, they have to start at this point.

Take another illustration. If a man happens to be judge, nobody can take his responsibility from him. In our mediaeval buildings in Germany it is interesting to observe that in the places where the courts sat you sometimes find a picture of the Last Judgment, reminding the human and earthly judge that there is one Authority above him to which he has to answer for every single verdict he is uttering as judge. And this is a constant reminder of where his ultimate responsibility lies.

I might refer also to the illustration of a statesman. Nobody can take the responsibility from a man if he happens to be a statesman, no party and no public opinion. He has to answer for that responsibility which

God has laid upon his shoulders. I think here is the place where one of the open wounds of modern political life could be healed. The longing of the nations, of the whole tormented world, could be stilled, if statesmen were fit for personal responsibility. That ought to be the contribution of Christianity to modern political life, and I think it is one of the most important things Christianity has to provide.

### *The relation of man's existence to God*

There is a second line involved in the Christian conception of a person, namely its insight into the relationship of man's whole existence to God. We know about all these biblical passages in which man's natural existence is related to God. Forgive me if I just remind you once again of the great passages of the Bible, one we heard yesterday evening. It seems to be a rather modern setting of the problem. "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the motion of the stars which Thou hast ordained, the question seems to arise naturally, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him ?" Note the answer of Revelation — "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour".

You may think of all the other passages in the Bible which speak of this glory and dignity of man given him by God's creation. It is distorting the divine truth if one tries to explain Christianity in terms of a natural pessimism about man. One must never forget this original calling of man to his place in God's great order of creation, and that implies the uniqueness of personal existence. "I have called thee by thy name." There may be a long chain of ancestors before you, and there may perhaps be a long chain of posterity after you, but there is one point which never will occur again, and this point is where your name is fixed in history. "I have

called thee by thy name". There is only this one person called by your name.

You may know the other great passage where man thinks of this fact, that God knows about the person. "Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect. In Thy book all my days were written when as yet there was none of them." This is utterly different from any biological conception of man. There is no bridge between these two conceptions of man, and the one essential thing is to understand that they are different. "I have called thee by thy name."

But now there is one other important element added. All this appeals to man's natural existence, but it is one of the great conceptions of the Bible that man is incomplete as long as he does not have a spiritual existence as well. It is one of the greatest sayings of one of the greatest apostles, "God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", which means this: there was a day when God performed the miracle of calling forth the light to shine upon the world, and the same miracle has to be performed in every man's life. God must call with the same commanding voice the light to shine forth in man's heart, in order that he may have a complete existence.

Here is what the purely biological point of view has done; so many among us are unable to see a person in his proper light. Man's existence without the knowledge of Jesus Christ is incomplete. Man does not lead a full life, a complete personal existence, if he does not pray. He is meant to be that way.

### *The interdependence of men*

There is this third element, very essential in Christian thinking about a person; it is an element very familiar to most of you, that of living together. I said that at

the bottom of man's personal existence lies the knowledge that he lives and dies in utter loneliness, but that does not mean that all his life is lived alone. Individualism is one of the biggest illusions of man, whether it be philosophical or just naïve. Philosophically, or if you prefer, even in the realm of thought, this conception of individualism is erroneous. There is never just "I", there is the I-Thou relationship, or better put the other way, the Thou-I relationship. There are parents, and it is simply futile and ridiculous to think of oneself without one's own parents. I am not the first person in the world, and I shall not be the last, or the only one. Nobody is. There is the nation, there is the spiritual and intellectual tradition. Everything, every single thought we form, every single word we utter lives upon this heritage which has been conveyed to us, and there we may discover also the secret of actual personal existence. We always live together with other living persons, but we are bound to see them as persons, which is so utterly necessary.

Someone asked the question the other day : why has kindness so completely disappeared from public life ? What can we do to reintroduce kindness as an essential element into public life ? It cannot be introduced simply be reflection or decision. We have to make a very serious distinction between organisations and living human beings. We all feel inclined to think in terms of organisations, and, if we do so, we are always in danger of forgetting about the human beings which constitute these organisations. Therefore sometimes, I say sometimes, one single act of kindness may be more powerful than the remarkable efforts of a well-run organisation.

Mankind lost, not just this or that achievement, but a specific quality of life when it lost this understanding of human beings as an essential element in all organisations. I think that is what the great saints of the Middle Ages (and may I add, because I believe in the living God, the great saints of our days ?) have to teach us, that always a human person is much more valuable

than any powerful organisation. This is a Christian point of view. Now this is where our sense of responsibility becomes real. Let us try to live, to lead a real life, not just through books or organisations, but in the immediacy of personal human contact. And here life becomes rich and beautiful and adventurous, if we learn to think of it in terms of meeting persons.

### *The joy of God*

Now let me conclude. It is the bounden duty of Christians today to bring good tidings of great joy to a troubled world which is haunted by fear: the good tidings of what man ought to be in this world, what a real person is, and what life really means. In this very moment I feel the great responsibility which lies with everyone of us, and especially with you, the younger generation. We have to proclaim in an uncertain world the glory and dignity of a real person, the vocation of man to lead a real life in its fulness. Let me quote one of the greatest sayings of Calvin, *Status mundi in Dei laetitia fundatus est*. The world has its basis in God's joy. That is what we have to proclaim. "That they may have life", as Jesus said, life in abundance, life to the uttermost. We are called, in a world which seems to be hopeless and filled with despair, to start living a real life, and being real persons.

# Christian Faith and Political Justice

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

*“Think you”, said Mary Queen of Scots, “that subjects may resist their princes?”*

*“If princes exceed their bounds, madam, no doubt they may be resisted even by power”, replied John Knox.*

*“My conscience is not so”, said Mary.*

*“Conscience, madam, requires knowledge; and I fear that right knowledge you have none”.*

*This is the prophet of God standing before the majesty of the world in the proper fashion.*

We have to speak as Christians to each other. Some word of God has to be spoken against all of us before it can be spoken for us. When we talk about the relationship of our Christian Faith to the tortuous process of establishing justice between the nations, we are all as unprofitable servants. This is a world with broken communities. There are the broken family communities ; there is the dissolution in national communities, some of them engaged in civil war. There are international communities that ought to be born, and cannot be born. That is the real situation. We had better, both secularist and Christian, stop accusing each other. We Christians say that it is all due to the fact that this is a secular age which has rebelled against the Christian faith. But the fact is that we too have failed to solve the problem. We have failed to obey the command to love one another, to love our neighbours as ourselves. This is one of the difficulties which has led to failures and mistakes in the relation of Christian thought and life to the political order. We must as Christians remember that there are

particular reasons why we who stand in the Christian faith, and who are faced with the difficulty of organizing a political community, should have some great contribution to make.

### *The reasons why Christians have failed*

May I say a word about the difficulties in relating the Christian faith to the problem of political justice? The first difficulty arises from the fact that the ultimate pinnacle of the Christian faith, and the ultimate pinnacle of human personality, is individual. The final relation of man to God is individual. The final judgment is an individual judgment. And it is where these things are known to God, and not to our fellow men, that we are most truly ourselves. God must bring nations to judgment, but the final judgment is a judgment individually. And the final redemption is an individual redemption in the sense that this final redemption is an individual experience. This Christian and transcendent individualism is frequently transmuted, particularly in Protestantism, into a bourgeois individualism. It is individualism at the expense of the community which is one of our great dangers.

I think it is a very important thing for us to read the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, for many reasons, including this, that the New Testament lives pretty much, as it is bound to live, in these ultimate pinnacles of life. But Isaiah and Moses associated themselves with the community. Moses pleaded with God that He might save His people; and, if not, that He would blot him out of the book of life. Isaiah confessed himself as a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips — which is the proper conception of the relation of our social environment to our own individual sin. As individuals, we have difficulty in relating the ultimate individualism of the Christian Gospel to the problems of the human community as we must organize it politically.

## Christian Faith and Political Justice



There is a second great reason why Christianity has failed in this whole great realm, and that is that, if there is such a thing as personal redemption from self-love, it must express itself in the wider community ; it must be expressed in the family life, in the national life, and in the international life, and community. This is what is so difficult for sectarian Christians to understand. This great realm of the international community is more ambiguous, and will remain to the end of history more ambiguous ; for whenever we thus organize ourselves in love and mutual consideration, there has to be the beguiling and suppressing of self-interest. If redemption means redemption from self-love, it must bring forth "as a fruit meet for repentance" concern for the community. In the realm of politics there is power ; and we have to use power in order to bring recalcitrant members of the community to our standard of justice. Power is a dangerous thing to use. Power may be the basis of order and justice, and also the source of disorder, which is why it has to be resisted. One might say that the greatest achievement of democracy is incorporating the principles of democracy into the principles of Government. We have to resist power because it is not only necessary, but it is dangerous.

Sometimes I think the British genius for politics lies in the fact that there has always been an exquisite relationship between the sense of power and the sense of justice in the British community, which has not always been due to the careful working out of the principles ; you have more or less stumbled into it. I mean to say that there have been and are British statesmen — Gladstone, Sir Edward Grey — and those of the present day (I will not mention them), who can use power and yet speak as if the whole business of politics were governed by the Sermon on the Mount. We must not be cynical in our use of power. There is this tremendous problem for the whole of the Christian world in relating the Christian faith to the political order. All of us have been involved in various forms of error in relating the two.

*The obvious mistakes of Christians*

Let me mention a few of the obvious mistakes that the various communions have made in trying to relate the redeemed life in Christ to an unredeemed community. There is the mistake to which the Lutherans have been particularly prone. They have said that redemption belongs only to the individual life, and out of that has grown up the error of defeatism in regard to the political order in such a way that all political decisions are regarded as equally morally ambiguous. There has been the sharp distinction between the realm of grace, and the realm of law, where the best you can do is to maintain some kind of order. This is defeatism — to say that redemption belongs only to the individual life, and to let the community go to the devil. There is a tendency to this kind of defeatism in a great many forms of vital Christianity.

There is a second great error to which, perhaps, my own country is prone, the error of sentimentality. The idea of this form of Christianity is that it will make all people really good. Everything then will be related as it should be; because everyone will be so good. This is an awful illusion. Perhaps one might call attention to the fact that if all of us were completely sanctified, in the sense that we never thought of ourselves, even then, if we got beyond the family, we should need instruments for the application of our principles to the political order. The political instruments of the State are not purely negative; they are also positive. For the expression of our obligations they would have to be organized, and they would have to be instruments of power.

There is, in the third place, the error of fanaticism, to which both Catholics and Calvinists are prone: the attempt to define the Christian standard. This leads to a dangerous fanaticism. The political position is more relative than that, it is more coloured by self-interest than that. May I say this to those who are prone to the Catholic interpretation? When in this modern day

people tell us that we have gone all astray because we do not believe in God's law, we may remind them that they may believe in that which does not happen to be His law. This was a problem also in the Middle Ages when they were a little bit more humble about God's law, and not only about the law which is written in the Scriptures, but particularly about the law which is written in the heart which may be corrupted by the sin in the heart. You had better be humble about God's law before you are too sure that you have got a Christian politics or a Christian party. I think Karl Barth is right. It is a dangerous thing to mix the sanctity of Christianity with any political position, however necessary and just. Christian politics taken neat is a very dangerous proposition because men are prone to think that they know what the law of God is for any particular situation.

There is a third group which is inclined to this kind of fanaticism, namely Christian sectarianism of the social type. It declares that you can get rid of ambiguous politics, and establish Christ's commonwealth upon earth. Winstanley, the English sectarian of the seventeenth century, speaks of evils that come out of property. But he made one great mistake. The Christian truth that he saw he put like this : there was once upon a time universal love ; then sin came into the world. That is the Christian interpretation. But he went on to say that sin came into the world when property came into the world. That is not true. It is true that property can be an instrument of sin, which the bourgeois have not always understood. It is a very important thing to recognise that property can be an instrument of sin. But it is not true to say that property, or any other social thing, is a cause of sin. This is a great perversion of the facts about human nature. And what has come out of this mistaken idea has been particularly dangerous. If you believe that property is the root of sin, then, if you get rid of property, you should be in the Kingdom of God. It is like a student of mine. I suggested that

Russia, as all big nations, had an imperialist impulse, an impulse of power. "That is not true of Russia", he said, "because Russia has had a revolution; and nations that are no longer capitalist are by definition non-imperialist"! The point is that we have in our world Christian sectarian fanatics. They are not so dangerous when they are dreaming of the Kingdom of God in the future, but they are dangerous when they claim that they have got the Kingdom of God. The real folly of mankind comes out of self-righteousness.

### *The necessity of decision*

I have spent all this time analysing the mistakes which we have made, mistakes which are bound to be made in our Christian history. But let me now conclude by dealing with some of the positive contributions which we, as Christians, must make to the achievement of justice in Britain, and in our modern world. I think we must understand, as Christians, that we must make decisions in the political sphere, however ambiguous the subject may be. There are no decisions so unambiguous that I can force other people to take them, but I am quite sure there are decisions sufficiently unambiguous for me to take and for you to take. We must not allow ourselves to be beguiled from making responsible decisions in the political sphere. Let me give you an illustration out of our contemporary experience. We have been moving into a technical society which has destroyed the old forms of justice, and there have not been established new forms of justice. Decisions should have been taken. Christianity has refused to take decisions, positive social decisions. Sometimes this has been because such decisions were morally ambiguous; but the principal reason why we have not taken them is because we Christian people believed that we were on the side of those who would have been hurt by them.

If property is an instrument of sin, the accumulation of property, and the centralization of power, has to

be dealt with. For where power is absolute there will be injustice. This is the situation. As a result, on the European continent there are all kinds of rent communities. We Americans have not approached this situation yet. We are still living in a state of innocence, though not the innocence of the Garden of Eden! Now all kinds of decision have to be taken. When private property ceases to be private, it ought no longer to be private. The fate of Western civilization depends upon this kind of decision, but it must be taken with sufficient circumspection. Communities have been rent by civil war. The achievements so far have not been perfect. One could wish they had been as perfect in the whole Western world as they have been in some of the smaller Scandinavian nations.

We have left certain areas of life completely unredeemed. All political redemption is approximate redemption, and cannot deal with the final issue of human existence. We have to make our decisions whatever the ambiguities. We have to recognize, no matter what decisions we make — and I think you in Britain have arrived at a pretty high level of decision — that the political problems always remain unsolved. This is something which we have not understood. This is how history moves. You have decided — I think wisely — that you are going to have more planning than the other nations that glory in freedom. You have given freedom to a larger number; but you have to solve the relation between freedom and order. And there is only one place where that is possible, and that is in the perfect love of God. There is a certain conflict between freedom and order. You want an order which is going to preserve all the essential freedoms — the freedoms which we require for man to be man. How many desirable freedoms are you going to sacrifice? You will have to work at this problem in the nation for many years to come. Democracy might be defined as a system of society in which you seek to solve the problems of freedom and order.

Here we have to bring in a certain amount of Christian individualism. There is no political order that does not require that. Christians must recognize their individual responsibility. There is no scheme of justice ; there is no way of organizing your life, or your way of life, by law. You may still isolate yourself within the community and make the whole relationship intolerable, so that there is no possibility of any justice there. There is a necessity for this responsibility from the standpoint of the Christian faith. This realm of Christian experience should be guarded, so that we should not imagine that any scheme can obviate the necessity for this personal responsibility being exercised.

### *Forgiveness leading to faith and hope*

We must not be weary when we find we still have new problems to solve. We have from the Christian standpoint to recognize the fragmentary character of all our political achievements. It is true that we move in this realm from one position to the other in such a way that history deals with the problems of political justice ; so that we get more completely into the control of the destiny of history. If we do not recognize this, the forgiveness which we require will be lacking. Many of the terrible aspects of our modern existence are due not only to the fact that our communities are broken, because we do not know how to create brotherhood within the technical society, but to the fact that we have not been able to heal them by forgiveness. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God also in Christ hath forgiven you". This is a word which is meaningless to the secular world, and to the Christian world, in so far as the Christian world is too full of self-righteous fanatics. In our most righteous moments we can see impulses in history, which are dangerous to the community. We must have an ultimate understanding of the deep pathos of being divided from each other. If this cannot be healed by

forgiveness, then we are undone. Forgiveness is the final form of goodness which comes out of a recognition of the fact that none of us is good. That is the final paradox of the Christian faith. It is said that nations cannot forgive ; they are not close enough to the throne of grace. Nations constitutionally are self-righteous. To me the most awful thing is that nations cannot forgive and are incapable of recognising their mutual involvement in the guilt of mankind, and therefore inevitably spoil a just victory by vindictive passion.

Finally, we must live by faith and hope. We are living in a day in which we do not know what to-morrow will bring forth. We must constantly be reminding ourselves that we are living in the realm of insecurity ; and we can only live like that by faith. We live in this realm of insecurity. We have beguiled ourselves into believing that mankind was supreme over nature, and just then we felt ourselves confronted with this vast insecurity. Take H. G. Wells. Think of his optimism in 1933 when he wrote *The Shape of Things to Come*. Everything there rested upon a group of educated, civilized beings who established universal tyranny. Then in 1943 he wrote *The Mind at the End of the Race*. There was in that the note of despair ; for in that book he said : "We are living in an age in which the law of gravitation no longer works in the physical world ; nothing makes sense ; we have reached an impasse through which, and over which there is no way out. It is the end". This is, unfortunately the end of this kind of optimism about the political order ; but yet it is never the end. "Dying, yet, behold we live. Perplexed, but not in despair" — we must always say that with St. Paul. Those who have a genuine Christian faith are never in despair, because they know that "neither death nor life, nor any other creature, can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". Living by faith we live in a world which is never endangered, and points to a city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God".

## The Christian in World Affairs

W. A. VISSER 'T HOOFT

There have been times when student conferences turned to the subject of international affairs with eagerness and real expectation. The windows were thrown open, visions were shown of the nations which after centuries of misunderstanding had at last organised themselves for constructive collaboration and durable peace. International affairs represented a territory full of promise and adventure. You and I do not live in such a time. Most of us will have come to this meeting with a sense of hopelessness. Have we not put our newspapers down often enough with the reflection that the world is just a big mess? Most of us have to overcome some inner aversion to concentrate on the international scene. And those of us who have friends in many countries, and who are blessed and cursed with some power of imagination, have to make a double effort. For it hurts to realise what the news really means in terms of human suffering both mental and physical.

A student Christian conference, called in the framework of the World's Student Christian Federation, cannot refuse to face the international situation. We *must face it*, because it represents the reality of a world which belongs to God, and which He desires to save. We must face it because the course of international events affects our lives, and the lives of our fellow-men so profoundly that the whole orientation of our existence is involved. For how can we, how can anyone anywhere, who has his eyes open, suppress the insistent question: what does my life, what does my work mean, if we are

constantly confronted and threatened by political or economic chaos and by total war?

Now I need not describe the present international crisis; we know already too much about it. We understand that it is a radical crisis in that it cannot be solved with a little more goodwill, and a little more readiness to compromise. The crisis goes literally to the roots. It is by no means merely political. An improvement of our political institutions cannot help us much. The machinery of the United Nations is by no means ideal; and it is worth while to fight for the limitation of the right of veto, and for the strengthening of the position of the smaller powers. But no technical improvement can change the hard fact, that there is a distrust between the nations, so deep, so fundamental, that even a perfect system is bound to break down under its weight.

### *Facing a spiritual gulf*

The gulf which exists between the two great blocs is in the last analysis a *spiritual* gulf. We have to do with two worlds which are rooted in radically different convictions about the true and the false, or right and wrong. And let no one get misled by the fact that some of the same words are used as slogans on both sides. For the tragedy is precisely that these words do *not* mean the same thing. Russian or communist leaders mean what they say when they rejoice in the liberty and democracy which have been achieved in their part of the world. They are deeply convinced that they are the true lovers of peace, and that the warmongers are to be found on the other side. The great battle of words around the conference tables, in the Press and the Radio, is precisely so utterly ineffective, because there is no longer a common language based on common generally accepted values. That is why nothing is more beside the point than the vague, moralistic appeals in which too many Church bodies and Christian organisations still indulge, and which exhort the nations to seek peace. As if there

were really many statesmen, or even military men, in this world who do *not* prefer peace to war. The real issues are: *which* peace? *whose* peace? peace at *which* price? And these questions are not answered in abstract statements about the desirability of peace, but in concrete decisions about the situations which contain the germ of war. If I were Mr. Bevin, or Mr. Marshall, or M. Bidault, or Mr. Molotov, I should feel very indignant that, while I am spending long weary hours in the dullest and most sterile discussions, I am exhorted to strive for peace by people who do not lift a finger to solve the real issues on which *the* peace of the world, in fact, depends.

We cannot take the basic division in the world today too seriously. The first duty of the Christian in international affairs is to face facts; and this is the root-fact. The question that comes to the Church, and to every individual Christian is: what is your attitude in, and to, the division of our one world into two hostile worlds which are increasingly estranged from each other, which find it more and more difficult to agree on any important point, and which might easily drift from cold war to total war?

There are four more or less obvious possibilities. We can choose to take the side of Russia and of communism against the Western powers, and their capitalism, or semi-capitalism. We can choose to take the side of what we may roughly call the West against the so-called Eastern, Russian world. We can seek to establish a third force between the two hostile worlds. Or we can refuse to have anything to do with the present impasse, and withdraw into an other-wordly realm of the spirit. Let us look briefly at each of these attitudes.

#### *The appeal and the tragedy of communism*

The first attitude can be defended by strong reasons, some of which must carry weight with Christians. It is a fact that the most radical onslaught on social injustice

has come from orthodox communism. It is a fact that age-old social evils in Russia, or in Eastern Europe, which bourgeois society, and also the Churches, had never tackled, have been removed under communistic leadership. It is a fact that peoples fighting for their independence and freedom have often found more understanding and support in Russia than in the West. It is, therefore, not surprising that there are Christians, particularly younger Christians, who feel drawn to this new world which deals so successfully and drastically with the evils of the old world, and has such a profound sense of mission in the social realm. There is something wrong with the Christians who do not have a sense of shame if they come to know the rock-like certainty, and the readiness to fight for a new world which finds expression in the attitude of young communists. One can understand the reflection of a Christian youth leader who was first at Oslo and then went to the Prague Youth Festival, and said upon his return : "Among the masses on the *Stalinova* Christ was present with an incisive complaint about unprofitable servants".

It must also be remembered that a case, though to my mind not a fully convincing case, can be made for the thesis that the capitalist world is, by its very nature, an aggressive world and that to resist it is automatically to defend the peace. It is not so very easy to explain satisfactorily that while one has not yet heard of Russian military forces in the Americas, America is present as a military force in the Eastern Mediterranean. And it is not self-evident that Dutch military action in Indonesia is just police-action while Russian action in East Asia is imperialistic.

I believe, however, that those Christians who identify themselves with the Russian cause are making a profound mistake. It is not merely the fact that communism is based on an avowedly anti-Christian ideology ; for it might represent the son in the parable who says, no ; but does, in fact, what the father demands. No, the real tragedy of the Russian and communist cause today is

that its original intention to save the masses of the workers from economic exploitation is increasingly replaced by another purpose, to maintain a rigid political system run by a relatively small political élite which identifies the interests of the world with the interests of Russia, and indeed, with its own interest. Whatever communism has set out to be, whatever it may still represent in the eyes of disinherited masses, or sincere social idealists, it has *in fact* become a dictatorial power which shares the fate of all dictatorial powers, namely that in order to maintain itself, it uses anti-human methods, that it becomes a law unto itself, and thus proves incapable of serving the interests of humanity as a whole. What Marx conceived as a temporary means has become the dominating purpose. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which was to be a stage on the road to the free society, has become the permanent dictatorship of a minority, who have themselves become victims of the demon of uncontrolled power. Once again an earthly messianism has led to the ruthless self-assertion on the part of an absolutist, self-righteous system. Once again men have attempted to be like God and assumed such power over their fellow-men as can only belong to God Himself.

### *The temptation of anti-communism*

Should we then identify ourselves with the opposite cause, and join the ranks of those who consider it their sacred mission to combat Russia and communism, in all possible ways, and to defend our present Western civilisation ? It seems at first that the Christian arguments which force us to become full-fledged anti-communists are overwhelming. We are confronted by a force which desires admittedly to overthrow our form of Christian civilisation, including its most precious heritage of spiritual and political liberty. Must we not rally round those nations, and those leaders, which are most able to defend that heritage ? Must we not rejoice in

the emphatic language which comes to us from Rome, and from Washington? Must we not follow those prophets who ask us to make this battle our supreme concern, just as we made the fight against the national-socialist tyranny our own concern a few years ago?

I realise the force of these insistent questions, but I believe nevertheless that they represent a temptation rather than a call of God. There are strong reasons why the Christian Church should not identify itself with that wide anti-communist front which has grown up in recent years, and will undoubtedly gain in strength and in scope. All positions in which the "anti" dominates become in the long run obsessions, and condemn those who hold them to sterility.

But there are special reasons why the Church must not allow itself to be lined up in this front. For if it was it would confirm the tragic misunderstanding that it is indissolubly linked up with the *status quo*. Those whose main preoccupation is the struggle against communism are forced by the inherent logic of the conflict to defend the existing social and political order in the Western nations, and to defend especially those aspects of that order which are most opposed to communistic solutions. In this atmosphere the fight for freedom against tyranny becomes almost automatically the defence of capitalist *laissez faire* against social planning; and the attack upon communist conceptions of property takes the form of advocating a purely individualistic notion of private property which, of course, has far more to do with Roman law than with the Christian Gospel.

Now the Christian Church has too often ranged itself on the side of the powers-that-be, and too often given the impression that while it pretended to stand for the divine commandments, it stood, in fact, for the old order. It has too often sought to save its own external institutional life by seeking to maintain a society in which it enjoyed certain privileges. The Church of our time must not make that mistake again. Its task in a largely paganised world is precisely to live among the

self-seeking nations and societies as the one body which has no other axe to grind than the axe of God's Word. The Church will only fulfil this vocation if it succeeds in disentangling itself from the bourgeois society with which it has become far too closely associated. It must therefore today more than ever adopt the cause of the disinherited. It must make it perfectly clear that its Gospel is not *against* this or that group of men, but *for* all who would listen to its good news, whether they be marxists or bourgeois. Moreover, the Church which is rediscovering its ecumenicity and universality, dare not let itself be lined up exclusively with one part of the world against other peoples and nations, among whom the Church is also planted.

### *The dream of the third force*

We are then forced to turn to the third possibility, the third force which would be neither capitalist nor communistic, neither anti-Russian nor anti-Western, and which would seek to hold a true balance between freedom and social order, and seek to reconcile the two hostile parties. Now there can be no question about the need of such a force. There can be no doubt that the only hope for the world lies in the finding of a synthesis between the respect for persons and the desire for social justice. The world looks eagerly for the way out from the bad and fatal alternatives with which it is faced. So the third force is the great dream of all those who have understood the real sickness of our own civilisation ; the third way is discussed, advocated, and acclaimed as the one remaining hope for the world. But, somehow, this third force does not get going ; somehow it does not become an independent, a creative, a determining factor in the international situation. Somehow it remains a mere dream. Why ? Just because it is only a third force, a force far too much dependent on the existence of the two other forces to give a clear answer of its

own. Or, to put it otherwise, because it is not yet the expression of a great spiritual discovery, a commanding conviction.

That is, perhaps, the greatest tragedy that has taken place in these last years. The noble and constructive ideas that emerged in the time of the great common struggle, the faith in a rejuvenated, socially-minded democracy, the hope of a federated Europe, the attempt to make the Church socially-minded, and to give the Labour Movement a new spiritual basis — these things have simply not come true in such a decisive way that they can really save the situation. Neither you in Britain, nor we on the Continent have had the deep and strong conviction, the clear insight and the courage to make that vision of the war years a strong reality. And so the third force today looks pale, theoretical, ineffective beside the great going concerns which have written the one-sided slogans of liberty alone, or social justice alone, upon their banners.

At this point we come face to face with the full tragedy of the division of the world into two worlds. In some nations of Eastern Europe where the third force — the force of democratic socialism — was strong it has already been successfully suppressed. In other nations of Europe the inner pressure resulting from communist action and the outer pressure resulting from the conflict of the great powers are increasingly forcing the governments to choose sides, and so to cease to act as a mediating factor. And the Marshall plan — which I consider as an action of imaginative statesmanship on the part of the U.S.A. and by no means as merely a specimen of American imperialism — has, partly because of the Russian reaction, the net effect of linking any possible third force more closely to one of the two main contending parties. It would, therefore, be unrealistic to speak and act as if there were today a considerable vital space for a third force, and as if such a force could in the near future break the terrible deadlock in international relations.

*The retreat into otherworldliness*

What remains then? Shall we not withdraw from the whole depressing stage of international affairs? Is it not best to refuse to share any responsibility for a world which seems clearly heading for suicide? Arnold Toynbee writes: "We have to abolish war and class, and abolish them now, under pain, if we flinch or fail, of seeing them win a victory over man which, this time, would be conclusive". Well, it does not seem that either is to be done away with, so why not fall back on the spiritual realities, on the deepening of personal faith which will allow us to stand even that catastrophe, on the proclamation of the eternal Gospel, which men will need more than ever in the critical years to come; on the consolation implied in the coming of the Kingdom?

There may not be very many in this country who have reached that point of withdrawal. But in other countries which feel the daily pressure of the situation more acutely, it is a real issue. I discussed this matter recently with a group of young Christians in an Eastern European country. I found that they realised the importance of the prophetic task of the Church in international and social life. But the experiences of recent months, so they said, had taught them that an increasingly totalitarian society simply refused to listen to a prophetic witness, so they concluded sadly "there remains nothing but the plain proclamation of the Gospel to individuals". Must we accept that conclusion? Will we all have to retreat to that last trench, where nothing else counts except the word of personal faith? No. That retreat would be tantamount to desertion. Whatever forces may appear to run the world, this world has been subjected to Jesus Christ, the King. The Church's job is to announce Christ's actual sovereignty over the nations in season and out of season. A clean separation of an individual and spiritual realm from a political and social realm goes against the whole message of the

Bible. And it does not become more biblical if the Church is faced with a totalitarian situation. On the contrary, it is in that situation that the Church must make clear that it believes really and truly what it preaches.

### *God's creative challenge*

It would seem that the four more or less obvious attitudes which the Church might take, and which Christians might take, in the present international situation are all blind alleys. Now this suggests that the questions which we tried to answer are inadequate ; and I believe they are, indeed, inadequate because they are based on the common assumption that the world situation comes first, and the Gospel comes second ; and that the Gospel exists to solve the issues presented by the world. Now, according to the message of the Bible, it is just the other way round. Jesus Christ has come into the world, not to be interviewed about the best means to solve the world's conflicts, but to ask of all men, of all mankind, a fundamental question. And the Church which represents Him in the world must, in the same way, take the initiative, and proclaim that life and death challenge.

As long as it lets the world decide what the real issue is, the Church is weak. If it accepts the present false alternative which the world would force it to accept, it is at an enormous disadvantage. In that case the Church must either identify itself with the totalitarian state, and that means to leave the affairs of this world wholly to the state, and withdraw into a purely inward and other-worldly realm. Or it must identify itself with the bourgeois order, which means to defend in the name of the Gospel, a great many things which have nothing to do with that Gospel.

This, then, is the first and foremost principle of Christian strategy in international affairs — not to accept as final the established fronts, but to create a *new*

front, a front which seeks to cut across the existing fronts ; not to accept the sterile dilemma of the present political situation, but to introduce into that situation God's creative challenge. I know, of course, that the Church, and we Christians, appear quite ridiculous when we say such things. What is the *Church*, who are *we*, that we dare to speak of challenging the massive, historic forces, with their cocksure self-confidence, and their unlimited propagandist resources ? I realise that the Church can only speak thus if two miracles take place : the miracle of a real repentance, a turning round, which makes the Church deeply ashamed of its guilt, its acquiescence in intolerable injustice, its involvement in the great disorder, and its lack of prophetic vision ; and the other miracle of the Church becoming once again the spokesman of the Holy God — speaking the word which is a two-edged sword, which is not merely a word of judgment and salvation for individuals, but for the nations.

### *The indispensable foundation of solidarity*

Can we expect such miracles to happen ? What use is the Church if it does not believe that these miracles actually happen, and happen when the confusion of man is at its worst ? This means in practice that the Church, instead of linking itself with the least dangerous or most favourable system, instead of waiting till an effective third force emerges, instead of complaining vaguely about the badness of men, instead of praying abstractly for some kind of peace — dares to raise the simple direct, concrete human issues. When the Son of man, Who is the true King of this world, gathers the nations in front of Himself, and the great judgment begins as described in Matt. 25, then the one and only criterion is whether men have cared for their fellowmen, whether they have treated them as fellow-creatures, whether they have been on the side of the needy, the poor, the disinherited. And the King of kings, and Lord of lords, goes so far as to declare that the act of true human solidarity is in

reality service rendered to Himself. "In so far as you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even to the least of them, you did it to Me." Remember that those brothers are not just the Christians ; they are *all* men for whom He died. And note that in the Bible this question is put to the communities, the nations, the races, as well as to individuals.

The real test is not ideological, or political ; the decisive problem is the human problem. The real issue is not whether the Eastern or the Western order will prevail ; the real issues are those of struggling, suffering men, who ask for some measure of justice, of human dignity, of freedom, of security. The point is whether we can get these many self-contained egocentric worlds, which we call nations, or blocs of nations, and which have to live together in the one world created by modern economy, and modern technique, to be sufficiently concerned for their fellow-men in other parts of the world, so as to feed them in their hunger, and to stand by them in their effort to break out of their prisons. This is not mere idealism. This is in the most literal sense a matter of life and death for humanity. In the past *nations* and civilisations have died when the indispensable foundation of solidarity gave way and men ceased to feel responsible for each other. But other nations, other civilisations carried on the torch. It is our destiny to live in a world in which the minimum of world-solidarity is required, if life is to go on at all. Let me quote Arnold Toynbee again : "Class has now become capable of irreversibly disintegrating society — and war of annihilating the entire human race. Evils which hitherto have been merely disgraceful and grievous have now become intolerable and lethal and, therefore, we in this generation are confronted with a choice of alternatives which the ruling elements in other societies in the past have always been able to shirk." We might say that international affairs have become so complicated, that only very simple, very naïve solutions can save us. It is all or nothing — planetary solidarity, or catastrophe. What

happens to the refugees and the homeless in Germany, to the hungry millions of China and India, and indeed to the masses of frustrated, anxious, despairing men and women in all countries is, now, very much *our affair*. If we refuse to be our brother's keepers, there is no other future than the judgment : "begone from Me, you accursed ones".

### *Opposing the denials of solidarity*

If everything depends on the working out of an order of active human solidarity, then it is clear that every major breach of that solidarity is a real menace. We must not become obsessed with the most visible and most advertised problem of international relationships. That problem would not be half as acute if in the Western world, and in those other areas where the West wields the main influence, we could give a clear demonstration of the meaning of solidarity. But the maintenance of racial inequality — the attempt to continue the exploitation of so-called dependent peoples, the refusal to fulfil legitimate demands of social security, the unwillingness to arrive at a large-scale solution of the increasingly acute refugee problem, the treatment of the vanquished as peoples without rights, and perhaps, most of all, the nervous defence of our national sovereignties which jeopardises the emergence of an effective international legal order — these evils prove that the West is half-hearted, unimaginative, and hypocritical in defending the cause of solidarity and create that deep suspicion of our actions and motives which it is so hard to overcome in the minds of non-Western nations. Here, then, we find a job to do. At this point there is no room for frustration. The Christian who would fulfil his vocation in international affairs must tackle one of these great issues. Every denial of human solidarity has today something explosive about it. But the solution of these immediate problems of human relationships is the

casting out of devils, and, therefore, the only truly effective way to resist war.

And if we now turn again to the big conflict — and consider it as men who know that they are responsible — that they have to respond to the living God for what they have done, or left undone for their brethren everywhere — we must say that we must leave no stone unturned to avoid that the breach should become unbridgeable. We are responsible for man on both sides of the iron curtain. Yes, we have to take a clear and definite stand on such points as are clearly part and parcel of our Christian convictions. Yes, we have to stand for spiritual freedom, for the dignity of man, the inviolability of justice. But we must not do so in that self-righteous spirit which rejoices in showing up the sins of those on the other side. We must realise that every challenge directed towards the East comes back like a boomerang towards the West. And if we speak up for the essential liberties, we must expect to be challenged concerning our acquiescence in a system which makes men slaves of economic forces. We must act as men who care enough for their fellow-men in other nations to crave for them what we crave for ourselves.

It goes without saying that we must also resolutely refuse to participate in criminally irresponsible or cynically defeatist talk about the inevitability of war. Whether war would destroy the others or ourselves, or all of us together, is immaterial from the Christian viewpoint. Knowing what the judgment is upon those who refuse to feed the hungry, can anyone imagine what is in store for those who accept responsibility for advocating or starting atomic war?

### *Demonstrating Christian solidarity*

Further, as Christians, we must be more concerned about the will of God than about the evils of totalitarianism and *laissez faire*. To combine freedom and order

is not, in the first place, the job of the economist. To break through the deadlock between the bourgeois Christian world and the socialist and labour world is not, in the first place, the job of the politician. These things happen when men have been set on fire with new overpowering insights into the truth of God concerning persons, and concerning human relations, and are ready to live and fight for these insights.

But Christian action to achieve a world order of solidarity will be utterly ineffective, if Christians do not *demonstrate* solidarity. How dare we try to convince the world that the nations, *unaware* of any strong common bond, must live as members of one body, if Christians who *are* aware of their dependence on one and the same Lord do not manifest the oneness of His Body? It has been said of the early Christians that they held the world together. And there have been moments during the last war when the same could be said, since the only human relationships maintained across the fronts were those of brotherhood in Christ. In a world which is falling apart, Christian unity is not merely desirable — it has become an indispensable form of Christian witness on which the trustworthiness of the Church depends. That is why the ecumenical movement is far more than a movement of Church dignitaries with a special concern for the reunion of the Churches. It is potentially, and must become increasingly, the visible, effective protest against the erection of iron curtains, colour curtains, or class curtains. And it must prove to cynical men, as no amount of theoretical argument can possibly do, that there exists a solidarity which operates even in the midst of acute international conflict.

In that sense the reconciliation between the German and non-German Churches which took place at Stuttgart in 1945 was not only an important date in the history of the Church, but an event of real political significance. That was also the true significance of the Oslo Conference last summer. That Conference did not give such clear marching orders concerning the international situa-

tion as many had hoped for. But it did something else and perhaps even more important. It made Christian unity *relevant* in international relations. The young Christians from all continents assembled there discovered that this unity is not a sentiment to be enjoyed, but a power which must and does make a difference in the realm of hard political facts. The importance of the Conference at Oslo was not merely that there was a resolve to hold on to each other in spite of difference, but also and especially that there was a resolve to seek together for a common way out. It began with what an Indonesian delegate has called "the handshake under the Cross", between the Indonesians and the Dutch. Then, it spread to the Germans and the French, the Czechs and the Hungarians, the British and the Indians.

In this light also the missionary task of the Church takes on a new significance. In going out to the peoples of different lands the Church has practised solidarity on the deepest level. In the early period of missions few, if any, ever thought in terms of the relevance of that spiritual solidarity to international and inter-racial relations. Yet here again the seeking of the Kingdom has meant that other things were added unto us. Through missionary initiative the Church has become, at least potentially, a world-wide community, and Christian men and women in the West have been related in the deepest possible way to Christians in Asia and Africa. The great question is now whether we are going to make full use of that force of cohesion for the re-uniting of these separated nations.

This also is the relevance of the World's Student Christian Federation to international affairs. We are to use this extraordinary gift of God, which is our experienced solidarity with Christians of all lands, in order to open breaches in the walls of separation and misunderstanding between the nations. And we are to be *different* in our political decisions because of that solidarity. Westminster, 1948, has not done its work in you if after

having lived, discussed, and prayed with your fellow-Christians of many other lands, your attitude to other nations has not been purified and changed.

*An appeal for courage and faith*

Let me conclude by a double appeal. The first is to you as British people. Some of your best friends in the world have one thing against you. In the past you have not been known as an excessively modest people. Why then have you suddenly become so hesitant in proclaiming those things for which, in fact, you stand, and in which you believe? In comparison to other nations you have received gifts, you have been able to do things which could have a deep influence on the world's life, if you would only accompany them, not with propaganda, but with a clear, effective statement of your convictions. We on the Continent had hoped that Britain, which had stood the test for all of us in 1940, would produce much of the drive and the constructive thought which would create a new order in Europe, and particularly in Germany. Similarly, Asia where you have given a noble lead would, surely, like you to follow that up by a definite advocacy of the cause of subject nations. Modesty ceases to be a virtue if it means the refusal of responsibility. My appeal to you young British men and women is that you should have the courage of your convictions, and speak up for the discoveries in human relationships, which as a singularly coherent, old, and yet amazingly adaptable nation you have made.

My second appeal is to you as young Christians. What I have said about the present situation amounts to this. The world is in such a great mess that nobody can show us a way out which has any chance of being accepted by mankind in the near future. You will, therefore, have to live without the expectation that the world will become within your lifetime an ordered, secure world such as other generations, rightly or wrongly, expected. Now the great question is how you are going

to adjust yourselves to that situation. Will you let it discourage you to the point of cynicism ? That would be a very normal, a very human reaction. And I do not see how you can escape it unless you hear the eternal voice which speaks more insistently and more convincingly than all the hard facts of the world put together. Now my appeal is that you should take that voice seriously, more seriously than anything else in the world. It is the voice of the King Who governs this world in spite of all appearances to the contrary. When that voice tells you that even in this impossible world, yes, precisely, in the midst of this suffering world, there are immediate tasks to be fulfilled, will you then answer : I will not follow you unless you give me a clear idea as to where you are leading me, and unless you guarantee tangible results at short range ? Or will you gratefully expect to be liberated from the tyranny of results and rewards and rejoice to be used for the great plan which embraces a great deal more than your lifetime and your world, and which will find its fulfilment in the new heaven and the new earth ?

## Christian Obedience in the University

H. A. HODGES

The problem of the university is too big a problem to be dealt with by one man in one speech, and there is nothing for it but to take one side of it and have a look at that. I can only take the side in which I myself am most interested, because most personally involved, and that is to consider the university, not as a community, a place where men live together, so much as a place where men think. For me, the problem of the university is a problem concerning that ; for universities, and for that matter all schools and colleges, are places where men think, and are taught to think.

### *The job of thinking*

Now this means, in comparison with the two previous addresses, a change of emphasis ; for the last two days our thoughts have been led to deal with the affairs of the world, the affairs of nation, commonwealth, and the international community. Those are practical affairs, economic, social, political affairs, and now I have what is in some ways the difficult task of getting you interested in the world of thought. My only consolation is that, after all, the world of thought is the world to which we all belong ; it is the world out of which we came into this conference, and to which we shall return when we go back to our colleges and universities. Whatever our job in life may be, our object as students is the job of thinking. Moreover,

there is a clear and obvious connection between the thinking we do and the life of society which was studied yesterday and the day before. For schools, colleges and universities are, after all, social institutions. They are supported in increasing degree not by individuals or by private endowments, but by the financial resources of the State. They are institutions by means of which society trains its younger members. Whatever society may think of itself, whatever its purpose, its aim, may be, it is constantly having to train younger members, the oncoming ones, to understand that aim and play their part; and colleges and universities are the place where that is done. They are the places where society trains its younger members, and especially its élite. So the first question is, what does it give them there, and what should it give them there, what should that training be?

Two things are obvious, and I shall not dwell on them. The first is that our business in colleges and universities is to acquire information. I know it is customary nowadays to sneer at the acquiring of information, and to say that it is not education. It seems rather a silly thing to me. I cannot imagine education that does not contain the imparting of information, and I cannot see people going through life without having acquired quite a lot of information, which it is the business of the schools, colleges and universities to see that they get. Secondly, every course you take in every college or university imparts to you a certain skill. It may be a manual skill; it may be a manual and intellectual skill; it may be, as in such departments as my own — philosophy — a purely intellectual skill. Still, it is a skill. You learn to perform some skilled operation of the mind or body or both together, something which you can only learn by practice and by inserting yourself into an existing tradition. Information you get, and skill, as you acquire it; so far you have got the absolute minimum for technical knowledge in any society. What more? This is where it begins

to be interesting and important — what more? You should have, and I believe in spite of the croakers you do in fact have, in colleges and universities, in addition to the information you get and the skills you acquire, some sense of context and public purpose, some sense that the job which you will ultimately get has a meaning, has a place in the life of society, which justifies it, and justifies you in taking it, that the job can be related to your abilities, or your abilities to the job, that in it you can not only fulfil the public purpose, but also fulfil yourself. All that necessarily results for any one of a lively mind from the training he receives for the preparation of his work in life. In fact, the question whether this sense of context and purpose is there or not is no less than the question whether our education makes us persons. For this is the difference: whether we are to be cogs in a machine, unconscious of the forces that drive us or of the purpose for which the machine is constructed, moving as we are pushed or driven, and knowing no more; or whether we are to be members of society, which is a living body composed of conscious members, members who know how they relate to one another, who do things knowing what they do, and knowing why they do it.

### *Education for persons*

The business of education is to make us persons in this latter sense, responsible beings who know what they do and know why they do it. This applies not only to education at universities, but to all education worthy of the name, down to the lowest grade school. The only difference is that, even today, in our sophisticated society, the great mass of people have this sense of context and public purpose in the marrow of their bones, in their muscles, in their sentiments and feelings rather than on the top of their minds. It is in them, it operates, it holds society together, but it is there buried and implicit, whereas the business of a university

is to make this sense of context and of public purpose, explicit, to turn it from a feeling into an idea.

I think we can all understand this and accept it as truth, and I think we can further understand in some degree how this would work in a Christian university, in a Christian society, such as we have not got, and such as perhaps we never did possess. At the centre, of course, would be God. God would be at the centre of the whole world of knowledge, because God is at the centre of the world of reality. God alone, in any proper sense of the word, *is*, is so utterly that He cannot rationally be thought not to be. Any assertion which declares or implies that God is not, is in the last resort nonsense. It may take a very long time before you get to that last analysis, but it is so. God, above human understanding, invisible, incomprehensible, and not adequately expressible, God always being, and always the same, is the centre from which all being derives, and all good. Every created thing is real and is good, in so far as it reflects His reality and His goodness. The study of created things is in the last resort the study of Him, and the knowledge of created things is in the last resort the knowledge of their Creator; indirect knowledge, but such as is particularly congenial to such minds as ours, placed in the midst of created things, created beings ourselves, gradually making our way to a knowledge of the Maker through the made. The sciences, the arts, the humanities, every branch of learning is thus indirectly the study of the Maker through His work. Christians would know that, and every skill which governs the activities of men would also be a part of the service of the Maker, because as everything that is, man included, reflects the Maker, so every activity reflects His activity. "The Father is working until now, and I work", says Christ, and we also work in Him. The power, the meaning, the value of our work consists in the extent to which it is part of the work of God, part indeed of the work of Christ, part of the work of Messiah. That is the manner in which





with the world of objects and matter, with the rhythm of Nature, which seems so alien to us and so unrelated to our purposes and hopes and aspirations. And so the question of man's relation with Nature, and man's struggle with Nature comes into the centre.

### *Man's struggle with Nature*

If you come to think of it, it is an epic story, how man has struggled with Nature, how, starting with nothing but the powers of the body and the unformed mind, weak, although flexible and intelligent, and ignorant and dirty and disorganised, man nevertheless succeeded in building up the array of knowledge and power he now has ; and at every state it is a sort of friendly conflict between him and Nature. Man comes from Nature, but turns round and has to wring his subsistence from Nature by constant activity. Man fights Nature, forces her to yield up her secrets.

Francis Bacon describes the scientific and experimental method as a method of "putting Nature to the question", which in seventeenth century English means putting her on the rack and applying the thumb-screws, forcing an answer to our questions. And this we have done with striking results, for good as well as for evil. We have lengthened the average expectation of life, and filled the world with comfort, as well as noise. Let us remember that in the midst of all the bombs, let us remember at the same time the immense advance in medical knowledge and practice, and the beneficent aspects of scientific work. Yet at the same time, Nature is always coming back at us. We learn techniques of agriculture, and we get dust bowls, we learn to harness the forces of Nature and industry, and we get industrial diseases. And of course, in the long run, we die ; it is as well to remember that. However long we may keep it up, however long a run we get for our money, Nature has the last word : Nature ends us. But that epic story of man — MAN in capital letters — as the centre of an

interest, the thing that matters, the thing that means something in the world — that is the real faith of the nineteenth century.

I, in my unregenerate days, once wrote a parody of The Apostles' Creed, in which man was placed in the centre. "I believe in Nature, reality omnipotent, the ground of all phenomena; and in Man, Nature's self-consciousness, who was born of the virgin forest, suffered under drought and famine" and so on and so on — I forget the rest — it is a long time ago. I know it ended up by saying that some day he will conquer Nature and sit enthroned above her, master of Nature and master of himself, and will "judge the present and the past". He is already in that position, or thinks he is, the lord of history, the lord of time.

What is the means by which this is done? The eighteenth and nineteenth century faith is that this is all done by means of something called "reason", "enlightenment" (*Aufklärung*), clear thinking, which in time becomes more and more identified with scientific and indeed physical-scientific thinking. Reason, it is supposed, is a sort of self-regulating process. It is almost like a slot machine, guaranteed not to go wrong. You have got to learn to work it and then allow it to operate. It will bring home results in a constant exposure of ignorance, error and superstition, and a constant increase in knowledge and therefore in power. You and I know to what an enormous extent that is a description of practice today; there really is a power in man which produces something like those results.

### *Liberal rationalism and its effects.*

That system of ideas with man in the centre, and with "reason" taken as in itself inerrant, if only we allow it to work — that is a system of ideas referred to in our *University Pamphlets* under the name of "liberal rationalism". One could think of other names for it, none of them adequate, but all of us recognise the





*The crisis of reason*

Some of us talk, I think mistakenly, as if that which I have been describing were still the faith of the world. I believe it is ceasing to be so, and in Europe has ceased to be so. (There is always a time lag : this is a retarded country, it follows Europe at a time interval of anything from fifty to a hundred years). The crisis of reason, which is now just beginning to break upon us here, and has manifested itself already in this conference, is a long-standing crisis, a century old, in Central Europe, and has borne bitter fruit. It comes in two ways. First, science is so heavily weighted in the direction of analysis and specialisation that it has broken up the world of knowledge more and more into little bits. We do not know where the others are, and this has spread, owing to the prestige of scientific methods, into the humanities, into philosophy itself which used to be thought to integrate. It is a dreary story. An undergraduate friend of mine twenty years ago said that after reading essays two terms to a certain Fellow of a certain College, he had become convinced that nothing was in any way related to anything else. That was his summary of the upshot of a certain amount of analytical thinking. You have all met it in your several spheres, I have no doubt. The trouble about analysis carried too far is that it renders things meaningless.

The next stage is far worse than that. It is the discovery, increasingly made by reason itself, that it does not rest on its own foundation, that it is not really self-regulating and self-accrediting after all. We discover more and more that all forms of thinking, scientific, religious, or any other from, rest on certain first principles for which they themselves can give no logical justification. Again and again we come down to a pragmatic justification ; for instance, the principles of science are not self-evidently true ; they are not even easy to formulate ; but we are justified in working with them

because of the results we get, which no one can deny. That is a pragmatic answer. That is saying that the work of thought is ancillary to action, that thinking itself is an action, to be performed because of what results from it.

As we go deeper and deeper we discover, too, that the different forms of thought we adopt and the principles on which we work have a history. They change from time to time; we know enough history now, we know enough comparative civilisation, so to speak, to be aware, if we let ourselves be aware, that our mode of thinking in modern Europe is not by any means the only possible mode of thinking, and not the only one that has seemed reasonable to people. We see more and more that what seems reasonable to a particular group of people depends very much on their circumstances, external and internal. You get even a philosopher saying in so many words that what you believe depends on what you are. That was said one hundred and fifty years ago in Central Europe.

It follows that the whole business of thought is something not central to man, but an incident in something else. As an English philosopher said, "Seeing an apple is merely the first stage in eating it". So with all knowledge, finding things out is the first stage in altering and using them. The result of this kind of thing is the present-day spread of scepticism, relativism and irrationalism. The deep and ultimately true proposition, that what you think depends on what you are, has been converted into the proposition that it is allowable to think and act just as you feel from moment to moment.

### *The search for a focus*

In a world like this there is no focus of unity at all. Liberal rationalism had a focus; by our standards it was wrong; but it had a focus, which was Man. The sceptical world has no focus, no unity at all, and in





in the world in order to know and in order to control it. Adam names the beasts ; and "whatever the man called every living thing, that was the name thereof". He spoke with authority ; he imposed his will. Power over all the works of God's hands is given to man, and it is by means of science, by means, indeed, of rationalistic science, that we have taken the most dizzy steps towards the achievement of that divine purpose for man. Our sin is that we said "Our own wisdom, our own cunning, our own right hand and strong arm, has done this for us". We did what we were created to do, but we did it in the wrong way, and that was sin. It now meets its nemesis. Reason itself has exposed its own weakness, and we find ourselves carried away by all sorts of irrationalist movements, bringing even science itself under political control, prostituting it to social and political ends. We have seen it all happen. It will happen again in all likelihood. Why should we deceive ourselves ?

That sin meets its nemesis, but it only leads to the equal and opposite sin, when man says by virtue of his passions "I am like God !" It matters little in what channel his passions flow, whether he reverences a racial blood-stream or a class consciousness or anything else, so long as he finds the centre of his life in something that does not think ! I need not dwell upon this ; we all see quite clearly what it means in terms of human suffering and degradation. And our business now, as I maintain, is both to point out the sin of liberalism, and to recognise and set ourselves to conserve the real Christian virtues which it also contained.

### *The virtues of liberalism*

First among them is openmindedness. This is often misunderstood, for lots of people appear to think the open mind is the mind that never reaches decisions, open like an open door to every suggestion from every quarter ; anything may come in, or drop out, you reach no decisions, you make no commitments, you do not

grow. That is not the open mind worth having, not the Christian open mind. The Christian mind is open, not to every idea floating around, but to every person it meets. Christian openmindedness, and liberal openmindedness at its best, where the Christian can take it and recognise it and bless it, was the openness of one person to another, learning to speak and to listen without reserves, to lower your defences, and to listen again without building barriers, in that most Christian form of listening, where to listen is to be transformed by what you hear. Then when you listen you hear not words, and not an idea, but you feel the impact of a person; of a vision, therefore — a view of the world. Each of God's creatures has as much right to speak as you have, as much right to see, and to say what he sees. And the Christian mind is open to every word that may be spoken to it, not by other people, but through other people. For it is not that other people matter so much when taken by themselves, simply as human beings, but as what they are in the eyes of God. There is no human being who has all the truth, no human being wholly free from error at any point. There is no human being who can guarantee his own purity of heart, his own freedom from prejudice. There is no human being who does not need to be constantly rebuked by other human beings, and especially by those he thinks he despises. And there is no human being, however foolish, ignorant or prejudiced, who may not be to me at some moment the vehicle of the Word of God. He may not know it: very often the Word is spoken by men who do not know they are speaking it, but it is spoken, and anyone may be to me the vehicle of the transforming Word. To be open to other men is to be open to God.

Now if we understand that, that the real openmindedness is readiness to speak and to listen without reserves, under the wings of the Holy Ghost, we are taking an intellectual virtue which liberal rationalism recognised and practised as few other forms of thought





# An Indian Looks at the World Situation

M. M. THOMAS

Is there a political language which I, an Indian, can speak in common with you of the British Westminster Conference ? This question has been put to me by many of my friends both in India and in Europe. One of my Christian friends warned me that I must be true to myself, even if it meant becoming a jarring element in the harmony of Westminster. Another clinched the question sharply when he said that I would either have to speak truth which you here would consider falsehood, or speak falsehood which you would consider true. And as a matter of fact, ever since he told me so, I have been wondering myself whether I have any way at all out of the two alternatives he put to me. And the basic question underlying his statement has been more disturbing : Are truth and falsehood in politics so ambiguous and relative that we have to speak of *my* truth and *your* truth and not of *the* truth ?

## *Is there a common truth ?*

My mind for a moment went back to the years of the British-Indian political deadlock during the war, and to the correspondence the British and the Indian Student Christian Movements had at that time. The British Movement put some questions, and there were very few of us of the Indian Movement who were not irritated by the kind of questions they asked. Many students as well as some of the Christian senior friends of the Indian S.C.M. felt that there we had British imperialist truth put to us with the halo of Christian sanctity ; and I was

one of those who felt that it was simpler and more straightforward to face British people who were nakedly and frankly for power, rather than people like the British S.C.M. who were labouring to find reasons to justify it. Though some felt that it was useless to answer the questions, we did answer them. We certainly spoke the Indian nationalist truth with a vengeance, because that was the truth we held ; and though I do not exactly know what reaction it had, I am sure it may have been irritating and shocking to most in the British Movement. Looking at that correspondence now, I feel that we were speaking to one another *each one his truth*, which was falsehood to the other. But that was not the end of the story. There emerged out of that encounter a knowledge that, though we might question the politics of one another, we could not certainly question the fundamental honesty and openness of one another ; and there resulted the faith that the *political truths* which were so opposed to one another for the moment and found expression in the most tragic British-Indian Deadlock, were, in the final analysis, more or less perversions of *one truth*. I cannot see any germ of mutual understanding in the questions of the British Movement and the answers of the Indian Movement. But *that encounter itself* was proof enough of our faith that there was a *truth* about the situation transcending our perverted truths, a *truth*, which though we might not see it for the moment, yet was judge of both India and Britain, and to which both of us were responsible. In that faith lay the germ of understanding and in that faith alone the political deadlock was not taken as final.

So I come back to the remark of my friend. Certainly he is right that what I consider the truth of the present international situation will appear in large measure false and shocking to you. In the international conflicts, in which we are involved, my political orientation may be against yours, for all I know. But the fact that I am here on this platform, called upon to speak what I consider to be true, must speak louder than the

words I speak, and witness to the fact that the conflict you may notice between the politics I hold and those of most of you is not final. The determination to stick together in Christian fellowship, and to listen to one another in that fellowship whatever it may cost (and who does not know that it costs a great deal?) this, I believe, is the first mark of Christian obedience in the international world. This is the only way in which the World Church can be taken seriously in making our Christian response to the international situation. And it is the only way in which faith in *a common truth* can be held on to, when all the world over all hopes of attaining it have broken down, and two worlds in a "cold war", or a hot one, are the only political alternatives set before us. One world at peace is a reality in faith and hope for those who belong to the Church of Christ. The fact of the World Church, transcending national and class politics, is the only guarantee of the redemption of our perversion of truth and of the emergence of any common political truth in the long run.

Does this not mean that under no circumstance can we give our *total* loyalty to the broken and perverted truths we know now. We certainly must still speak these truths and fight for them. And perhaps in the next decade we may be called upon to shed one another's blood for the sake of the fragmentary values each holds dear or wants to create in the world. And every moment when I make a political choice and affirm a political truth, I shudder to remember that some of my Christian brethren, whom I have known in the World's Student Christian Federation, have made their choice for the opposite camp, and that we may meet as "enemies" in the battlefield some day for the sake of the truths we see as Christians. Hence it is that Christian obedience in the international world today is a tragedy. Whoever does not know in the inmost fibre of his being the tragedy and pathos of Christian obedience in the present situation, has not truly realised what Christian obedience means.

*The revolt of Asia*

It was with these and similar thoughts in my mind that I spent a day reading through the Westminster syllabus on World Affairs. And I found myself agreeing with every theological assumption implied in it, and violently revolting against every political conclusion. Here was the clearest evidence to me that I could do my task here only in political opposition to this Conference. I was not surprised about it ; for how could it be otherwise ? All Indian Christians who have been called upon to face their Christian responsibility in the international world have found themselves in the same situation ; and they have been more orientated to the values of Western democracy than I have ever been. And I remembered Sir Maharaj Singh at the United Nations Assembly. The name came to my mind because he was the one Indian Christian who had to discharge his responsibility today in the international world as a member of the Indian delegation to U.N.O. Did he not find himself at the United Nations gatherings almost always in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon and Western European powers on all vital issues ? The battle he fought with the imperial powers in the trusteeship council for securing greater space for the nationalist opposition in the dependent and colonial countries, which to my mind was just an extension of the principle of the rôle of opposition in Western democracy to international affairs, was fresh enough to remember. The Indian delegates' battle with General Smuts' racial segregation policy, which again was a fight for the extension of the Western democratic values to non-Western races, was not fought with the aid of the Anglo-Saxon powers, but almost in opposition to them. The Indian case at U.N.O. against the Dutch colonial war in Indonesia was defeated by the Western European veto ; and was not the backing of the Anglo-Saxon powers for the Dutch clear enough both inside and outside the Assembly ? And I said to myself : if the Indian delegation to

U.N.O. had to form itself in opposition to the Western European world, it was only natural that I should find myself in revolt against the Westminster syllabus and its international politics.

But I must confess I was more than surprised at the basis of approach the syllabus makes to Asia and Africa. In the syllabus, it seemed to me, South East Asia was considered primarily as a source of raw material for European economy; the Middle East primarily as a source of oil for Western European security and the African colonies primarily as a source of fat. These they certainly are; and this needs recognition. But for a Christian I would have thought that, though he might not consider these areas as the abode of persons, when he made political judgments, at least he ought to consider them as the abode of peoples with some political rights.

I know some of the more theologically minded are now thinking that I am being sentimental in my approach to the relation between the Western powers and the nations of Asia and Africa, and that I do not take serious account of the rôle of power and self-interest in the international world. To such theologically minded people imperialism is realism and all talk of nationalist opposition to it is utopian. I have never been able to follow that argument. Certainly the theological renewal, and the consequent understanding of the rôle and necessity of power in the relation between nations, is all to the good. And certainly power, necessary to maintain order, always goes along with imperialist corruption. But to my mind, the same theology that makes imperialism inevitable also makes nationalist opposition to it necessary, if some sort of justice is to be maintained. Dr. Niebuhr has said that the recognition of the opposition is the essence of Western democracy. And it is precisely the denial of this recognition that I find when the syllabus talks of Britain "educating" her colonies for freedom, as though freedom could ever be other than the transfer of imperial power to a powerful nationalist opposition.

In the syllabus I do not see any suggestion that today in the African colonies education for freedom should take the form of encouragement to the nationalist opposition to imperial power ; nor do I find any recognition of the spirit and power situation that exists in South East Asia. Christian realism demands both.

### *Contrasting guarantees of freedom*

I have not yet talked of independence. Independence in the ultimate sense of the word may be impossible in the present age ; but it only means that the content of a nation's independence is to be looked for in the nature of the interdependence it works out with other nations, especially with the bigger powers. But an international arrangement that leaves the weaker nations, like the colonial, semi-colonial and dependent countries, without any real scope for opposition to imperialism is, on the very basic Western principles, undemocratic. And it is only a truth if I say that the presence of the Soviet power in the United Nations Organisation is the one hope of these nations to preserve their right to resist and sustain their opposition. Left entirely to the Anglo-Saxon powers themselves, what guarantee is there for the preservation of the principle of resistance for oppressed nations and races ? The short history of U.N.O. has shown that there is none. The long history of Anglo-Saxon imperialism also shows there is none. This is the reason why the Asian and African nations which have won freedom, or are fighting for it, seek to work out the content of their politics in the context of a peace maintained by U.N.O., based on the unity of the big powers which included Soviet Russia. That is realism from their point of view. Is not the extension of Western democratic values to non-Western nations and races, as well as to international relations, dependent upon this realism ? I personally believe it is. And I also believe that Britain has the duty and the power sufficient to take the lead of the European and Asian nations alike in the

strengthening of the Big Power Unity, and creating the community of values which U.N.O. may be lacking today. This she can do only, if, instead of deciding to stand by America as an Anglo-Saxon bloc, she follows a bold policy of standing for the extension of democratic values to Asian and African nations and races, and of active neutrality between Russia and America, making decisions only on the merits of concrete issues as they arise and thus taking the political lead of the many nations of the world who do not want to make the perilous choice between the two big powers. Perhaps it is too late ; I do not know.

In any event for us in India to choose between Russia and America is perilous in the extreme, because, if Russian power bears for us the value of existence — economic, racial and national, yet for all values which make existence meaningful we feel ourselves orientated to the Anglo-Saxon and Western European tradition. As Christians we know too well that only the continuous challenge and conflict with the state of a community, which knows that man has ends and loyalties beyond society, can keep the vigilance necessary to maintain personal dignity, and the essentially humane values in society. That a Church exists in continuous tension with the state is the one guarantee of personal freedom in Britain. And the Church-state tension is the very essence of a personal democracy, because it alone keeps ends and means from reversing their positions. In this the tradition of the churches of Britain and Western Europe are immensely valuable for all nations, because they alone have a long history of the Church-state tension in society. And the political forms of the Western powers do, in more or less measure, embody values which are the result of this long history. No one, whether Christian or non-Christian, who has some faith in humane values beyond that of mere existence will therefore consider it other than a peril of the first magnitude for Asian nations to break away from their orientation to the Anglo-Saxon world. It is because of this

double orientation, on the one hand to the Soviet and on the other to the Western powers, both of which we in Asia want to maintain, that we would give such importance to Big Power unity.

### *The Church as the hope of Asia*

I have already spoken of the significance of the Church-state tension for a personal democracy. The small Church in Asia, consisting of less than 2 % of the population in India, China and other countries, is certainly weak today, and may not in the immediate future exert influence on the direction of politics and power. But a Church exists throughout Asia, for which we are grateful to God and to His ambassadors from the West in the modern period. The small communities of the Christian Church in Asia, proclaiming a personal destiny in Christ, beyond the functional orders of life and the state, are really the only *new* fact of modern Asia ; a great new fact because, for the first time in the history of Asia, faith in man as a person and reverence for his personality have become incarnate in society. Neither the ancient Asiatic society, nor the modern Western imperialism nor Asian nationalism have known anything of the kind. And those of us who have spent some time thinking and praying about our responsibilities in the political world have seen, in the spread of the faith and the growth of these weak communities, the only hope even for the political future of Asia. They alone can be the instruments of a permanent revolution in politics, and of a permanent renaissance in society, because they alone seek radically to change human nature and recreate man into a person. To most politically conscious Christian youth in Asia the challenge to take up full-time direct political work comes one time or another ; but those of us who have resisted that challenge and chosen to be political imbeciles, have done so because we have felt ourselves called, as part of our responsibility to politics itself, to deny politics and spend our lives in

the direct preaching of the Gospel and the building up of the Church. And it is here more than anywhere else that we would expect the partnership of you all.

Here let me stop for a moment to make my personal appeal and challenge to the delegates to this Conference to come over and cooperate with us in the missionary task. At Oslo, a British delegate told me: "You are suspicious even of our missionaries. Let us therefore go to countries where people won't be suspicious of us". That certainly reveals the temptation of the flesh and not the power of the Spirit. Having been in Europe for a year among groups suspicious of my politics, I can understand a bit of what tension you will have to bear in the present-day Asia! And perhaps that tension is intolerable when it has to be endured for a life-time, and might break down men and women who come to Asia for purposes other than the pure preaching of the love and forgiveness of God in Christ. One of my missionary friends from the British S.C.M., Lesslie Newbigin, once wrote, perhaps alluding to his experience during the dark years of the British-Indian deadlock, that there were times when even the best of Indian friends looked with suspicious eyes, and there was no basis for him to stand with the Indian Christian brethren except on the ground of a mutual forgiveness based on a common repentance and recognition of a common divine pardon at the foot of the Cross. That has been the experience of many missionaries, and shall be of all those who would choose to come in the future. But precisely in that difficult situation some men and women from the West have come to see their missionary vocation, and the relevance of it to all life including Indian politics and British-Indian understanding. As I face you today, my mind recollects the name of young Gilbert Hort of the British S. C. M. who came to India as a missionary exactly when the British-Indian deadlock was at its deepest and spoke to us of the Indian S.C.M. of a community of forgiveness in Christ. He gave his precious life to the Indian Church. C. F. Andrews, Metropolitan

Westcott, Bishop Lash, Bishop Walsh, E. Forrester-Paton, these and many others have been ambassadors of international friendship when the politics of internationalism were broken by imperialist-nationalist conflict and ceased to be. They were in India because they saw the vision of a unity of mankind beyond the political ; and in them and through them we of India saw that the international deadlock was not final, that the final reality was not deadlock and war, but unity in Christ. I pray that under God some of you, who listen to these words today, may follow their footsteps, see the missionary vocation in the context of modern Asia and boldly accept the tensions and the struggles involved in making the love of Christ known to the peoples of Asia. As far as one can see today, in a world broken to pieces by the idolatry of nation, race and class, the only word that will break the idolatry and unite the world is the Word of God calling men to repentance and renewal.

If this is true, then the World Church and its missionary and ecumenical movements have the only answer to the international deadlocks. There is no need to hold romantic illusions about these movements. We know the churches well enough to be despondent about them. We know the missionary movement sufficiently to know that much of it is part of the old world and must pass away. After one year of life in Geneva, I cannot but feel that the words the world Christian movements speak are, most of them, part of the world of deadlock and conflict. But the knowledge of the fact that the World Church is a body of sinners, involved in the tragedy of the world, does not lead me to despair, once I see them in the light of the Resurrection of the Crucified Christ. What if God in Christ has chosen the weak and the broken ? And so it is that, when faced with the most tragic facts of the world order, one can in triumph make the declaration : "I believe One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church".

## Reflections after International Discussion

KATHLEEN BLISS

Of all the facts in international relations, with which the studies in our groups have been concerned, I have only time to enumerate the new ones.

First, when we think of Europe, in studying international relations today, we look primarily to America ; and that is a new fact in history. Russia is half-way across what we have always thought of as the Western Continent, and we have few, if any, chances of knowing her peoples at first hand. Who would have thought that in a world of communications there could be so vast an ignorance about so great a people ? Even within the short memory of a student India has taken her freedom, made two new dominions, and started out as a new force in the world. The colonies assume a new importance. Britain herself is poor where once she was rich. "All our pomp of yesterday is one with Nineveh and Tyre". At the same time she is passing through a social revolution ; there is nothing new in that, for we have had many and we thrive on them, but at such a time as this it is a little much on our plate.

These things have come before our groups, and have been discussed. And the salient fact which has emerged is our abysmal ignorance. I would like to thank the foreign visitors in our midst who have so nobly borne with the difficulties of our language, our ignorance, our arrogance, and all the rest ; and have given us of their best.

*A new leap in the political sphere*

But in my string of new facts I have not yet touched the chief, and the most alarming — that man has snatched from God the power to bring to an end the life of mankind. Unless we face this possibility in sober reality now, it may come home to us one day with panic force. What is demanded of man is a great new leap, and it has to be made, first, in the political sphere. Three centuries all but a year ago, on a January day with the thin snow falling, a few hundred yards from this spot, a king of England knelt in prayer and bared his neck to the executioner's axe. He was a good man, a good husband, a good father ; in his private life he walked with God ; but he could not make the leap which the times demanded of him. He could not, poor man, as king jump into the new world which was being born around him ; and he remained perfectly adjusted to a dead past. He died, and events moved on ; but England was not rent. The lessons of creative conflict were learned ; they were embodied in new and revived institutions. England led the world in political change without destructive revolution. The thing young Christians find most hard to understand in political life is that it is not only, or even chiefly, by agreement and harmony that advances are made. Out of conflict, out of sharply-held views for which men will not only die, but kill, may, come when men are penitent before God for what they do, a new creation.

So we are faced — not one man on our behalf this time, but nations on their own behalf — with the necessity of a similar leap. It is first in the political sphere that this leap has to be made, for we have to build new institutions capable of dealing with the world around us in international affairs, and we feel almost with despair that the task is too great for us, and the time allowed too short. Looking back, we remember that men of the Victorian age, and uniquely of the Victorian age, thought

that the business of international politics was organising progress and security which belonged, so they believed, to the very stuff of the universe. But we do not belong to the Victorian age : we are where most men have been in history. We are set where death is always on the watch, not only on personal life, but on all our institutions ; and we have no hope of inevitable progress, or of inevitable security. Yet we may learn without doubt that history is full of inevitable happenings which do not come off, of new beginnings in unlikely fields which change its course, of men thrown to the surface from unlikely places, and of nations doing great things when they lacked power. Our political task which faces us is this. I am not asking you, as students, to set your lives towards becoming European, or world, statesmen. (It is a modern Christian illusion that it is only by leading that we serve.) We British are a politically-minded race ; that is our unique genius, which at this time in the world's history we abandon at our own, and probably the world's, peril. International statesmen arise out of a heritage, out of a society which has mastered the political art. As it may be the task of a few of us to serve God in the sphere of international leadership, so it is the task of all of us to keep alive in this country the political tradition, without which great international statesmen cannot be born.

Our second task is this. We are or we may become members of a world-wide community, the Church. In this community of the Church we live another life. Not a life of unreality, but a life of deeper reality, a life where men are open to each other, or may be, a life of abounding charity, faith, and hope. Because we do not understand the difference between these two spheres, and the importance of each, we get into many muddles about international affairs. We tend to think that instead of dealing with the intransigent problem of power between the nations, we can somehow get off with an honours degree in charity ; we can be the people who send the parcels, the people who stretch out the friendly

hand to foreign students, the people who are kind, but never conflict with anybody. I am not underrating these things, because the greatest challenge of the Church to the world is that it should show forth an abounding love, charity, goodness, kindness, and fellowship in a world rapidly losing the consciousness that any of these values are, in any sense, real. But what I am saying with the utmost vigour is that we cannot escape from the tasks of polities by substituting for them the work of the Church. It is not the business of the Church to organise the world's economics, but if the world's economics are not organised, the members of the Church will soon cease to eat.

### *A remaining missionary task*

I want to say just one other thing here. But for the work of Missionary societies, Asiatics and Africans looking at Europe would have regarded it, primarily, as the source of the industrial revolution, and the greatest destroyer of their indigenous life. For us Europe is a culture, a culture deeply influenced in its laws and institutions, in its art and culture and in its politics, by the Christian tradition ; so it takes an effort of the imagination to see how Christianity comes to the East, and to Africa. We think of it as a culture-making and preserving religion ; but to the East it has come as a culture-breaking power. For this reason the missionary societies have been thrust into the position of building up through their services of education and health a new culture in foreign lands, and because they are doing this, as well as engaging in the simple task of preaching the Gospel, the missionary societies pass into that realm of moral ambiguity of which Dr Niebuhr spoke. There lies before the missionary societies an unfinished task. Part of it can be taken over into the life of the new Churches, part of it will have to pass to new secular institutions. But student thinking has been confused about the relations of the mission to

the Church, and, therefore, there has been a lack of imagination about our simple duty to finish the task which our forefathers, with such costly sacrifice, began.

I have one more thing to say. I said at the beginning that unless we face the fact that from the international arena can break out forces which will destroy the life of persons, the treasured institutions of this country, the universities of the West, it will come upon us in an hour that we do not expect it in the form of a panic fear ; and then our faith will be put to the test almost beyond human endurance. We have to face now the kind of world in which we live. We have to see too that it is a world that has been made by man. We see in this realm of international affairs both the greatness and the sinfulness of man. And because it is a world made by man, it is a world for which Christ died ; it is redeemable ; and it is a world which lies under the sovereignty of Almighty God, little as the facts may seem to prove it. And our task as Christians is to go out among people, who, if they are not thoughtless, must often be reduced nigh to despair, and show forth in our lives a new and living hope. The only way to live through impending tragedy is to out-live it, and to live beyond it. Christians can show that death, even atomic death, has already lost its sting ; and the grave, even a common grave in a ruined city, has already been robbed of its victory. And if we live on the eternal side of these events, then "in quietness and in confidence" we can go about the tasks, political and churchly, which lie next to hand, knowing that the undying Christ is with us.

# Theology and Revolution<sup>1</sup>

“Perplexed but not in despair”

C. W. Li

The second World Conference of Christian Youth, held last July in Oslo, was attended by a large number of students. Two months afterwards, at an informal meeting of the W.S.C.F., a Federation staff member, who had great responsibility in that conference, said that there had been two main characteristics: first, the predominance of Reformed theology; secondly, the arrival of revolutionary Asia. This assessment is exceedingly significant, because, in the first place, Reformed theology (generally understood by Asian Christians as European theology) has been, and still is, a most momentous force inside the life of the Church, during the past twenty years; secondly, the revolution of Asia has been, and still is, the most momentous movement in this world, involving more than one billion people, i.e. more than one half of the total world population, during the past twenty years. Therefore, the Church and world are focused together in this assessment.

## *Revolution in Asia*

In this focal picture the Church is torn apart between the demand of this world and the demand of itself as the Body of Christ. The revolution of Asia is a phenomenon of fundamental importance which the people in the

<sup>1</sup> An address given in Geneva on the occasion of the Universal Day of Prayer for Students, February 15th, 1948.

West may tend to overlook these days, in view of the immediate and impending issues at stake. On the eve of the opening of the Inter-Asian Relations Conference last year a newspaper editorial in India said that now as the curtain of the West falls, the curtain of the East rises. It is perhaps an arrogant expression of self-importance, but it certainly points out the real significance of the events now taking place in Asia. The important point is that the Church should not and cannot afford to escape from its responsibility for this historically unprecedented human revolution which, I believe, will be the determining factor in the course of world history in the next few decades, and even the next century or two.

While this focal picture concerns the Church generally, it concerns the World's Student Christian Federation particularly, because, first, students and intellectuals are taking the lead and initiative in the revolution of Asia ; secondly, the intellectual inclination of students leads them to seek some sort of formulation or expression of their faith. Thus, as they shake their heads at theology, they are nevertheless speaking about some sort of theology of their own all the time. The important point is what is our message to students in the face of this revolution and the confused and confusing theological viewpoints.

### *The conflict with theology*

Now, coming back to the Oslo Conference, it was my privilege to observe the inter-action of the two main currents above-mentioned. On the positive side, the Asians were greatly impressed by the absolute God-centeredness of the Reformed theology. The non-Asians were greatly impressed, or rather overwhelmed, by the revolutionary vigour of the Asians. Reflecting on the experience of the conference, I naturally feel that it would be perfect if we could fuse together the profound religious faith and the consecrated revolutionary spirit.

But that fusion is evidently not an easy matter. Those of you who have something to do with either the revolutionaries or theologians will agree with me that they are the two categories of people in this world who are least inclined to change their mind!

Actually, it is, of course, not a matter of personalities. There is a fundamental point of divergence, generally speaking, if not contradiction, between them. The theologians are entirely pessimistic about men; the revolutionaries are feverishly optimistic about men. The theologians want to destroy men's self-sufficiency; the revolutionaries want to uphold and boost it. An Asian delegate said to me that if he followed this pessimistic view he would have to give up the revolution immediately. That is a most treacherous and impossible thing for a revolutionary to do. Therefore, we come to a deadlock where the theologians and the revolutionaries are diametrically opposed to each other. This gives rise to the question: Is there only one alternative — either that we give up our Christian faith, or that we give up the revolution? This is a question asked today, at least in substance, by many Christian students in Asia.

To attempt to answer this question, one might ask: "Are the theologians and the revolutionaries not speaking about different things?" Very often you will find that the theologians are speaking really about the eternal things, namely in this case, the fundamental nature of man; the revolutionaries are speaking about the temporal things, namely, the mental faculty of man. It is obvious that while we may be very optimistic about the technological development of man, we are indeed pessimistic over the possibility that the folly of man may use such development ultimately to his self-destruction. It is obvious that while we may be optimistic about the great improvement in the change from an imperialistic rule to an independent state, we are indeed pessimistic over the possibility that the exploitation and injustice of human society may be thus eliminated completely and for ever.

The danger of the revolutionaries is that they tend to mix up the temporal and the eternal things. Their optimism tends to cross from the realm of temporal things to that of eternal things. They, therefore, believe that revolution can right all wrongs in the world. It is at this point that they might be led to the denial of God. This is why also the revolution in Asia is rapidly becoming a godless movement. In fact, all social revolutions in the world tend to assume this godless character.

### *What should Christians do ?*

What then should the Christian students do ? Shall we shrink from the challenge of the secular world ? No. Shall we be opposed to the revolution of Asia and all the revolutions taking place in the world ? No. Why ? Because we believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord of our history. We certainly cannot just trace the revolution to some sinister source. Although it would be a disastrous mistake to think that the revolution is God's will and plan, yet I for one cannot but believe that the wide awakening and rise of one billion people in Asia is another benevolent act of our Father, evoking new hope and new life among His vast human family. The danger of our revolutionary era is that the people use this new opportunity to run away from God, and want to become gods themselves.

The Christian attitude is therefore not to be fearful of the godless tendency of the revolutionary, but be joyful to the new spiritual potentiality of the revolution. The Christian responsibility is not in the least to blackmail and suppress the revolution, but to call the people to believe in and to obey God. For the S.C.M., facing the present student generation, our message is, first of all, that what we preach is not ourselves, not some school of theological or revolutionary thought, not our pessimism or optimism, not the preservation of the Western civilisation, not the superiority of democracy, but *Jesus*

*Christ the Lord.* He alone is light and power. He alone can help us to defeat all the prevailing secular pessimism and become unusually optimistic ; but He at the same time humbles us to a profound pessimism about our unfaithfulness and insufficiency. With Him we are troubled but not distressed, perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed.

It follows from this central message that we should not only distinguish Jesus Christ the Lord from our ideas and institutions, namely, the eternal from the temporal, but also should seek always first the eternal things and at the same time strive for the temporal things. We give due value to the temporal things, but certainly not the absolute value. The value of the temporal things is best given by St. Paul when he said that the life of Jesus Christ, the Eternal, may be made manifest in our mortal flesh, the temporal. In other words, the temporal things are of precious value in so far as they serve as a medium or instrument by which the eternal things may be made manifest to men.

In the world today, to preach our central message, to seek for the eternal and to strive for the temporal things means a great fight. In this fight every Christian, whether he be theologian or revolutionary, Asian or European, American or Anglo-Saxon, or African should join with others. As for the outcome of that fight, I am extremely pessimistic if we are tempted to follow the will of men, but I am extremely optimistic if we are led to follow the Will of God.

We are fighting for the day when as the curtain of men falls the curtain of God rises.

## AN AMERICAN VISITS WESTMINSTER

*The Westminster Conference sought to bring to the post-war generation of British students the meaning of the Christian faith for a person living in the modern world; in short, it tried to demonstrate the relevance of the faith to contemporary life in all its spheres. It presented the pattern for a Christian "interpretation of history". Some felt that the proclamation of the "pure" Gospel was somewhat missing, but I think that this criticism shows both a lack of understanding of what the Conference was trying to do and also a failure to understand the need for a new technique of evangelism among today's students. The conviction behind the programme of Westminster was that real Christian evangelism must meet people "where they are": as persons, as citizens, as members of the world family and as students of a university. In this way, the non-Christians — Hindus or communists — of whom there were a number present, were met on common ground and from there they could be led, if they felt so moved, to less familiar territory. This means that there was no great emotional impact exercised on most delegates other than the gradual sense of the immensities of the task ahead brought by sober and realistic speeches and discussions and the impressiveness of the fact that two thousand Christian students should have taken the trouble to come together to discuss these unpleasant realities. Therefore, it seems to me that whatever Westminster may have lacked in immediate emotional appeal it will more than make up in other ways; as was said in the Manchester Guardian Weekly: "One thing is certain, that whatever good this conference achieves will be shared by the whole community".*

*For Americans there are several points of observation which may be of interest and perhaps of constructive importance. The first is the difference in the attitudes of the various groups of delegates. Generalisations are usually false by their very nature but they are also useful; if I were to generalise about these groups I would say*

*that the Continentals were too academic, the Colonial students irresponsible, the Americans naïve and superficial, and the British complacent and self-righteous. Since the British students were the most numerous and since it was their conference I would like to dwell upon them, for I believe by understanding them we can learn from their achievements as well as their failures.*

*I need not dwell on their thoroughness in carrying through the general organisation of the conference, but I will go on to three other characteristics which I especially noticed at Westminster. The first is the serious-mindedness and the common-sense of the British students. I am referring here to their delicate sense of proportion. While other delegates might work themselves into knots talking about theoretical possibilities, the British students tended to stick to facts and to actualities which had at least a fair chance of realisation. Abstract thinking, hysteria, irresponsible criticism are all equally foreign to the British and it is this great virtue I feel which has enabled them to weather not only a terrific war but the post-war socialist revolution without a visible rent in the fabric of the country. The elephant America stampeded by a few pink mice could well learn something here. In the second place, one is impressed by the theological soundness which was evident at Westminster, both in the intellectual maturity of the students and the general approach of the conference. Neither dogmatic obscurantism nor humanistic sentimentalism holds sway but a sacramental orthodoxy which lives in the central stream of the historic Christian tradition and finds means and motives for action through a renewed understanding of the Biblical revelation in the life of the Christian community.*

*In the third place, one finds the baffling complacency which I mentioned earlier. This is not merely the observation of one individual but it has been corroborated in conversations with other overseas delegates. The British students simply did not face up to some of the issues which were either too difficult or too unpleasant. For instance, in discussing persons little or no attention was paid to the unfortunate class stratification and snobbery in British society; in discussing colonial problems the British students showed an abysmal lack of knowledge, besides being unwilling to raise the problem of the moral issues involved in holding colonies at all; in international affairs Palestine was side-stepped and few would listen to*

the Indian view that their past policies made them responsibly involved in the present bloodshed in India; though a number of German P.O.W.s attended the conference no one seemed aware of the moral responsibility resting upon them as citizens of Britain to see that these men were no longer retained as unwilling guests or slave-labourers in this country; and most of the British delegates seemed to assume as self-evident that Britain's present politics, economy and foreign policy represented the ideal compromise between America and Russia. One of the German delegates observed during one of the commission meetings, "You British tend to talk first as British and second as Christians". In another group an African student said, "British people either talk and don't listen, or listen and don't talk... patronising in the first place and self-righteous in the second". Later, when a British leader was told this he objected and said he did not see that listening and not replying to criticism meant anything else than an admirable open-mindedness. "Not at all", an overseas guest retorted, "It simply shows that you don't answer because you are so absolutely certain that you are right".

To make this criticism may seem uncharitable on the part of one who owes so much to British kindness and hospitality. But I think that it is quite necessary and beneficial for fellow-Christians to criticise one another and to speak the truth in love. I have already made these criticisms to British friends and so it will be nothing new to them. Best of all, the fact that the conference dealt with the themes it did shows that a certain amount of the complacency and self-righteousness is breaking down; one of the Indians present said that even during the conference itself he felt a good deal of it had been dispelled and he thought that augured well for the future.

As I have said before, these observations are made in order that we may learn by them. I think it is clear how much we Americans have to learn from the British virtues of thoroughness, common-sense, and theological maturity. In all of these respects we fall far short. And obviously by calling another self-righteous you thereby judge yourself; that is why it is more difficult to criticise the British on this point of complacency or even learn from their mistakes. There are indications that it is breaking down in Britain whereas in the United States, where humility has never been a dominant national characteristic, self-righteousness seems to be on the rise, and so

*we should be very concerned with its origin, cause and cure. In the case of Britain I think that it can be traced back to the fact that Britain has had to take an active and leading part in power politics in Europe and throughout the world for many years; at the same time a strong sense of public morality had been encouraged especially by the Christian forces in the country. The result of this was that when Great Britain had to follow an immoral or un-Christian policy in international affairs it either had morally to rationalise its action — leading to hypocrisy — or else hide the ugly facts by ignoring them as much as possible. Furthermore, in taking this leading part in world affairs Britain got, and came to expect, criticism from others and thereby lost her sense of need for self-criticism.*

*The importance of this for the States is almost too obvious. Besides having the insular security, the political stability, and the economic prosperity which were Britain's, America is now taking the leading and dominant role in international affairs. We too have a strong public conscience and a comparatively high standard of political morality. How are we to harmonise the ugly facts and necessities of power-politics with this ethical standard based to such a large extent on Christian principles? Are we to become sentimental and try to force our foreign policy into the pattern of the Golden Rule; or are we to become cynical and abandon the Christian moral principles altogether? That is the problem which faces American Christians today. Britain in much the same position in years gone-by resorted to hypocrisy and complacency to ease a troubled national conscience. America has followed much the same pattern in its attitude to the race problem. But in Nazi Germany the Christian morality gave way completely and there was no need for either hypocrisy or complacency, at least not on a Christian level. Will we be able to find a satisfactory alternative between these two destructive tendencies in the years that lie ahead?*

KEITH R. BRIDSTON.

## A VICE-CHAIRMAN REMEMBERS

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### Arrest by the Russians

*It was a rude shock for me when, after having been for a time protected by a sympathetic Russian commandant, I was suddenly arrested by the Russian N.K.V.D. on the threshold of my home — exactly as I had been arrested before by the Gestapo and thrown into German prisons. Now it was the fourth time in my life that I lost my freedom.*

*The weeks immediately following my arrest by the Russians were terrible. In spite of my record of anti-fascism, I very soon became the object of many unpleasant interrogations by the officers of the Russian Secret Service. The owner of a large estate and an old castle is simply a bourgeois Junker, and it did not matter what his outlook and political views had been during the Hitler régime — he had to be treated as a war criminal. These interrogations only ended when I was sent to a concentration camp in the Northern Urals. The final interview lasted, almost uninterrupted, for thirteen hours. They were all astonishingly alike; they were about my concern for the social welfare of my tenants, my military record, and mainly the functions I had had as a Christian Church leader, my position as President of the Confessional Synod of Pomerania, my participation in the resistance movement of the Confessional Church in Germany, and my position as President of the German Student Christian Movement. The following dialogue is typical of what went on :*

Commissar : *Are you a Priest ?*

I : *No, I am no theologian.*

Commissar : *What are you, then ?*

I : *I am the President of the Confessional Synod of Pomerania.*

Commissar : *I understand — the Holy Synod. Are you a Bishop ?*

I : *No. I am not a Bishop. But I am a lay member of the Church, whose task it is to lead the Synod.*

Commissar : *What is a lay member of the Church ?*

I : *(After having tried in vain to find the word in the Russian dictionary.) Lay members of the Church are simply Christians who want to serve their Church.*

Commissar : *(Triumphant and changing the subject.) Enough. Don't lie. I know now you are a Patriarch.*

*As honourable as this high clerical title of the Orthodox Church, conferred as it was now by the Russian Secret Service man, might have seemed, it was disadvantageous and dangerous for me under the present circumstances.*

#### Suffering and the presence of God

*After this, I had a very bad time. So bad it was that it can only be explained by the atmosphere of hatred, vengeance and animosity which was a direct result of the most dreadful breakdown of all times. I will not go into details, but still today I see before me the dark damp caves in which I lay, bleeding and half-dead from my beatings. Still today I can see the roads of Pomerania and Brandenburg and Posen along which we were driven as prisoners with the butt-ends of rifles, without shoes, without proper clothing, with bleeding feet. I have not yet forgotten the cattle-trucks, crowded with hungry and thirsty people, the sight of the bodies of those who, in desperation, had hanged themselves during the night, or those who had died of disease or of sheer exhaustion. They were now left behind in the deep Russian snow.*

*But, when these pictures of agony flash again into my memory, at the same time I am aware that, even in these terrible conditions, I was ever conscious of the presence of God and of His help. I still hear the quiet voice of the old man near me in the dark G.P.U. cellar, who repeated monotonously but consolingly the words of the twenty-third Psalm : "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want". Then I think of our incomparably beautiful service, which we improvised on the Good Friday evening in the Landsberger prison. I think of the young pilot in the Luftwaffe, of the young blacksmith from Pomerania, of the Catholic engineer and of all the others who, with serious faces, listened to the story of Easter with rapt attention, as if they heard it for the first time.*

*I recall the feeling of almost physical encouragement which I felt when, stumbling along the road, I remembered the words of the Old Testament : "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint". Then I remember the Russian officer who took me into his car when I was on the point of collapsing on the wayside.*

*And I see once again the fifteen-year-old boy, who, when I was lying in the ice-cold transport wagon with no covering at all — not even straw — wrapped me in an old blanket to save me from freezing to death. I can still feel the strong arms of the two mountain soldiers who took me and carried me along, with high fever and utterly exhausted, through the deep blown snow until I collapsed completely on the ground two hundred metres from the camp near Archangel, when the guard saw us and had me carried to the camp hospital.*

#### Life in an Arctic camp

*The camp to which I was sent was one of the innumerable, lonely barrack camps in the arctic Russian wastes. Everyone who was not ill had to work on the construction of the new railway in the Northern Urals. Those who broke down under the strain were allowed to be taken into a sort of hospital, but death took many of us — the old men and women, but also the young people, the boys and girls between fourteen and eighteen years old.*

*The camp authorities became frightened by the mortality rate, which they had not foreseen. The doctors discussed what could be done to fight against this widespread loss of valuable lives. I think they realized that the reason for the high death rate depended not only upon physical, but also upon psychological factors. The prisoners died because they wanted to die ; because they had neither moral nor physical resistance left in them. The decision was taken to try and overcome this general apathy and the atmosphere of hopelessness, and the camp doctor one day asked me to deliver lectures to my fellow-prisoners as a means of diversion. My journeys abroad, which I had undertaken for the World's Student Christian Federation, provided a rich source of material for these talks and, since it was mid-summer, we met in the open air as often as working*

time permitted. Everyone welcomed this change, small though it was, in the monotony of camp life. Gradually the audience increased, and finally I had to lecture for three hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon in order that everyone could be satisfied.

### The coming of Christian worship

As time passed, we got to know each other and to have confidence in each other. One morning I had talked about our international student conferences, held on a Christian basis. (Mysore, India 1928; Bad Boll, Germany 1932; Edinburgh, Scotland 1933; Lund, Sweden 1934; Mills College, California 1936; and Bièvres, France 1938). Then the suggestion spontaneously came that one Sunday we too, in our camp, should collect together for worship. The idea was immediately put into practice. Of course we had neither Bibles nor hymn books, but a seventeen-year old boy from the German settlement on the Black Sea had been able, despite all the searches of the Russians, to keep with him an old, gilt-edged hymn-book. It had been a gift from his mother, and he guarded it carefully. Now it served as the basis for our services. We had no pastors among us, but I as a layman took over the task as best I could. At our first meeting, there were only a few participants — a German dentist from Poland, a former Adventist, a Mennonite from near Danzig, and a baker from Pomerania. But next time there were more, and it was noticeable that there were many workers — two German Balts from Riga and Reval, a former actor, some carpenters and brick-layers, even a few former leaders of the Hitler youth and a policeman who had been an S.S. leader in Vienna. Finally, nearly all the inhabitants of our camp took part in our improvised services — peasants and townfolk, Protestants and Catholics. The only people who did not come were those who were too sick to move from their barracks, and so we would visit them there.

At first we could not sing very much because we could not remember the hymns, but the women and girls practised from memory, and made up our choir. When the verses were well known to us all, we would sing with them. A passage of our hymn-book which I interpreted very simply, speaking of what we needed in our abnormal situation, led us to praise and thankfulness. Then

*we had prayers; and in our prayers we did not forget the country in which we now lived and whose unwilling guests we were. Then we would say together "Our Father", and finally our choir would sing. I shall remember for a long time the sound of our women and girls — exhausted and prematurely old — singing again the song sung in 1919 by the Baltic martyrs : "Weiss ich den Weg auch nicht, Du weisst ihn wohl (I do not know the way, but thou dost know)".*

*A Confessional Church on the borders of Asia! Hungry people forgetting their material distress in their worship of God. A fountain of life in the middle of a world of misery, hopelessness and death. Mutua consolatio fratrum — as was said in the monasteries of the Middle Ages and later repeated by the Reformers — from a fantastic "existential" revival.*

#### The beginning of new life

*That this expression is not exaggerated was later made clear to me by my comrades, after our services had been forbidden. Even today I receive now and then a letter from one of the repatriates, which expresses the conviction that the services we held in our camp were the beginning for him of a new confidence on which he rebuilt his life.*

*But not all of us were to see Germany again. Many of those, who in August 1945 had sung and prayed with us, fell victims soon after to some fatal illness. I still remember that East Prussian National Socialist party member from the Johannisburger Heide. He was one the most faithful participants in our meetings, and belonged to the small group of more intimate friends who liked to come to me, not only to discuss personally their former political opinions, but to confirm the certitude of forgiven guilt and the reality of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. One evening he was no longer among us, and we heard that he had been taken to another barrack, gravely ill. Two days afterwards he died. We were not allowed to attend his burial in the primitive resting place under the pines in the endless Russian forests. But we knew him to be in the hands of God, to Whom all the world belongs, and Who had given to us all, both those who lived and those who died, the sense of His living, saving and consoling presence.*

REINOLD VON THADDEN-TRIEGLAFF.

## BOOK REVIEW

L'ACTUALITÉ PROTESTANTE. Collections théologiques, Editions Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel-Paris.

The French-speaking public has long suffered from an extraordinary lack of Protestant theological writings, both in the original French and in translation. It is true that during the last twenty years several publishing houses have made a real advance in the publication of works of religious education. Yet biblical commentaries, or works of a generally Christian nature, whether in France or in Switzerland, have been more directly addressed to the wider educated public in the Protestant churches than to the more intellectual groups, professors and students, and others who might wish to go more deeply into theological thought or research. The latter have had to turn to publications in the English and, even more, in the German tongue. We therefore owe the greater debt to the publishing house of Delachaux et Niestlé for the remarkable advance they have made since 1943 in this direction, which has given them a place in the front rank of French Protestant publishing houses.

Under the general title *Collections de l'Actualité Protestante* ten different series of a more or less definitely theological character are from time to time appearing. These books attempt to bring within the scope of their specialised public the results of the theological renewal which has been taking place on the European continent, during the last thirty years, and, in addition, set out to give significant glimpses of Christian thought in other parts of the world. If we glance at the list of publications under this general title we cannot but be struck by well-known names, like those of Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Denis de Rougemont, Roland de Pury, C. S. Lewis, Martin Niemöller, E. Hoskyns, Suzanne de Diétrich, Nicolas Berdyaev, H. P. van Dusen, W. A. Visser't Hooft and many others.

It is worth while to mention here four editions of a definitely theological nature.

1. Since 1943, and under the title of *Cahiers théologiques*, eighteen small volumes have appeared on very varied subjects whose aim is "to offer to theologians, the clergy and educated laity serious studies of the questions which face the Church today". Besides works of an exegetical, critical or dogmatic character we must mention the contribution made by these Cahiers to the study of problems of baptism (F. J. LEENHARDT : *Le Baptême chrétien* — Cahier No. 4), the government of the Church (H. D'ESPINE : *Les Anciens, conducteurs de l'Eglise* — Cahier No. 7), the Christian conception of politics (J. ELLUL : *Le Fondement théologique du Droit* — Cahiers No. 15-16).

2. Under the title of *Série théologique* several more important works have begun to appear. In particular a translation of Professor O. CULLMANN's *Christ et le Temps*, and a study by Professor R. MEHL on *La Condition du Philosophe chrétien*. These two books will be later referred to in *The Student World*.

3. In the year 1948 it is planned to produce a collection of *Manuels et Précis de théologie* which will contain about thirty-five titles. The aim of this series is to give for the first time in the French language a general view of theological teaching. In particular we would refer to *Introduction aux Problèmes de l'Œcuménisme* by W. A. VISSER'T HOOFT.

4. Finally there is announced a series of fifteen volumes of commentaries on the New Testament — another new enterprise undertaken in the French language. While preserving the exactness of exegetical science, it will aim at reaching a large educated public, and the list of authors contains the names of the younger generation of theologians who have appeared in France and Switzerland during the last two decades,

The authors have been chosen with great freedom and an evident desire to find a public for all that is valuable in the realm of theological thinking in the French language today. It is, however, clear that the main orientation of the new editions is in the direction of Karl Barth and his disciples.

Delachaux et Niestlé will in this way make a great contribution to the renewal of the Church in the present generation and we can but hope that through their more specialised public they

will succeed in influencing Christian education as a whole. A living Church may have its teachers and its theologians, but every member of that Church no less knows himself to be called within the narrow limits of his own powers to be a teacher and a theologian also. It is in this sense that the *Actualité Protestante* should be an instrument to the hand of every member of the Federation.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER : *De la Vie communautaire* (*Actualité protestante*, 1947). S. Fr. 4.50.

YANN ROULLET : *Lettres* (*Ibid.*, 1947). S. Fr. 4.65.

Two volumes have recently appeared in the above-mentioned edition which in spite of their different titles and aims have a considerable resemblance to each other. Both of the authors are young men, one a German, the other a Frenchman ; both were pastors and actually involved in the resistance to National-Socialism, as a result of which both gave their final witness to Jesus Christ by their death in concentration camps several months before the end of the war. But neither book has anything to say about the great struggle in which they died ; they reveal simply certain aspects of their deepest thought. The work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is essentially about community life and his illustrations are all taken from the most ordinary events of every day. He writes particularly about what it means to share in family and Church life, on the meaning of the Christian family and of the concrete unity of the Church. It is really a manual of the Christian life which a Christian might well use for daily meditation. It contains the fruit of experience and also the reflection of a man who was first and foremost a pastor and who writes as the guide of his flock about the foundations and the manifestations of the life of the Christian community. His aim is clearly to try to describe the meaning of such a community considered "as a reality not of a psychological, but a spiritual order" and based not so much upon the strength of human feeling and sentiment as upon its relation to Jesus Christ. "The Christian community, like holiness in personal life, is a gift of God on which we have no claim. God alone knows what takes place. What we feel to be insignificant may be of great importance in His eyes. It is not the Christian's duty to keep asking

himself how he has advanced in his spiritual life ; and in the same way God does not give us His Church that we may for ever be taking its temperature. He gives it to us that we may thank Him every day for it and it is only in so far as we do this that His Church becomes daily stronger, as He would have it do. The Christian brotherhood is not an ideal to be realised ; it is a reality created by God in Christ in which He allows us to share. It is only as we learn that Jesus Christ is indeed the foundation, the driving force and the promise of our community life as a whole that we learn to think, to pray and to hope for it with serenity" (p. 26-27). This is the foundation on which Bonhoeffer built his description of community life, a life which is both disciplined and exacting, but at the same time fruitful and life-giving, a life of which confession and the sacrament are the most perfect achievement.

The second of these two books is a posthumous selection of letters to friends. Yann Roullet, whom I had the great privilege of calling friend, had only touched his twenty-ninth year when he perished in a collective execution in the concentration camp of Struthof, after several months of imprisonment. He had only been the pastor of a small country parish for less than a year, but for some years before that, as a theological student, he had been considered one of the hopes of the Church. During these years, even before his ordination, he had acted for many friends the part of counsellor and spiritual guide, as this collection of his letters proves. The example of this man sums up in itself the qualities of the community life described by Bonhoeffer — a life lived for others, the gift of oneself through sharing in the life of the Church. I would only say with regard to him that I for one learned through him that "If God alone, if Jesus Christ, is not our strength, then we cannot live".

These two books come as a message from the generation which lost its best leaders in the resistance and the war. Possibly their main value is that they show why their generation lived, struggled and sometimes were victorious, though by human standards they often failed, by trying to live in loyalty to the Word of God. Any who are conscious of facing a similar task of suffering, of obedience and witness in these days of crisis will find in these two books a valuable guide and example.

Ph. M.